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2009-2010  
HOT Season for Young People  
Teacher Guidebook

# Fisk Jubilee Singers



Photo by Bill Steber



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TPAC Education extends a very special thanks to Professor Paul Kwami, for his generosity and his belief in our program.



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## Dear Teachers,

TPAC Education is delighted to present the Fisk Jubilee Singers as a part of our Humanities Outreach in Tennessee (HOT) season. We know you and your students will thoroughly enjoy the music led by Musical Director Paul T. Kwami.

This guidebook package will help you prepare your students for the performance on March 11, 2010. It contains information about the March 11 program, a Rise, Shine! CD, lessons related to the Rise, Shine! CD, as well as lesson excerpts from *The Fisk Jubilee Singers: Singing Our Song Educator Kit* \*prepared by the Tennessee Arts Commission. The Educator Kit was mailed to each Tennessee public school library in 2008.

The guidebook lessons are easily adapted for older or younger students. They can be used in music, social studies and language arts classes and support the Tennessee State Curriculum Standards in these areas. There are many opportunities for language arts, music and social studies teacher to cross curricula. Teacher Tips provide suggestions for adapting lessons to older or younger students throughout the guide. The lessons also address different learning styles by involving students in listening, writing, drawing, discussing, researching and evaluating.

Special Thanks:

**Robert Cogswell,**  
Folklife Program Director  
Tennessee Arts Commission

**Paul T. Kwami,**  
Musical Director  
Fisk Jubilee Singers

**Justine Gregory,**  
Guidebook Author  
Director of Education  
The Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum



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\*The [Fisk Jubilee Singers: Singing Our Song Educator Kit](#) is part of a project of the Tennessee Arts Commission under the American Masterpieces initiative of the National Endowment for the Arts. The creation of the original material was made possible by funding from the National Endowment for the Arts, along with generous support of Curb Records and WKRN television.

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## A note from our Sponsor - Regions Bank

Regions is proud to be a part of the Middle Tennessee Community. We care about our customers, and we care about our community. We also care about the education of our students.

That is why we are proud to support TPAC's Humanities Outreach in Tennessee Program. What an important sponsorship this is - reaching over 25,000 students and teachers - some students would never see a performing arts production without this program. Regions continues to reinforce its commitment to our community and education and, in addition to supporting programs such as HOT, we will have over 76 associates teaching financial literacy in local classrooms this year.

**Thank you, teachers,** for giving your students this wonderful opportunity. They will certainly enjoy the experience. You are creating memories of a lifetime, and Regions is proud to be able to help make this opportunity possible.



Jim Schmitz  
Area President  
Middle Tennessee



# About the Fisk Jubilee Singers

The Fisk Jubilee Singers are made up of Fisk University students and have been in existence since 1871. They sing spiritual songs that originated with African slaves in America and were part of their daily lives after conversion to Christianity. The original Fisk Jubilee Singers were former slaves or were children of former slaves and were the first group to publicly perform the songs of slaves and share them with the world.

The first music director, Mr. George L. White named the singers the Fisk Jubilee Singers after the biblical reference (*Leviticus 25*) to the year of the jubilee in which Hebrew Law required that all slaves be set free. Jubilee became a term applied to the choral style of singing these traditional religious melodies, and it was adopted in the names of most groups who sang in this style.

Between the years of 1871 (six years after the Civil War ended) to 1878, the Jubilee Singers traveled to Memphis, Chattanooga, Ohio, Illinois, New York, Washington D.C., Massachusetts, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Maryland as well as to Great Britain and Germany, where they sang to raise money for Fisk University. During their performances, they touched hearts and souls everywhere and then moved to other parts of the country and world.

--From *The Fisk Jubilee Singers: Singing Our Song*

## Special Note

The Fisk Jubilee Singers are the 2008 recipients of the National Medal of Arts.



Jubilee Memorial Bridge on D.B. Todd Boulevard in Nashville





# Fisk University Jubilee Singers®


## March 11, 2010

### Concert Selections & Related Activities


#### \***Rise, Shine, For Thy Light is A-comin'**

This Negro spiritual is very simple and lends itself to an interesting activity. When the Soprano and Alto sections sing their parts, all the boys in the audience raise their hands. When the combined ensemble sings together, everyone raises both hands and keeps them raised. (There will be a demonstration by the Fisk Jubilee Singers, to be followed by practice sessions for the audience, starting at a very slow tempo.) A performance of the song with the activity will follow.

#### \*\***Down by the Riverside**


- 
- This song will be used in teaching the "call and Response" form, commonly found in African and African/American music. The Fisk Jubilee Singers will demonstrate this aspect.
  - Another feature to learn through this song is that the African community does not separate the performers from the audience. For this reason, the audience will sing the chorus with the Fisk Jubilee Singers. Some clapping could accompany the singing of the chorus.

#### **Mawu nye lolo**



"God is love" – a Ghanaian song in the Ewe language. This is an original composition and will be accompanied with percussion instruments. Lesson: Percussion instruments form a major part of music making in Africa. The Fisk Jubilee Singers will sing this song after a demonstration of free body movement by selected Jubilee Singers to the rhythms played on the drums.

#### **Amen**



This spiritual will be used to teach about key changes in music. Whenever the music moves into a new key, the Fisk Jubilee Singers will extend their hands forwards and upwards. Students in the audience will also raise and sway their hands from left to right as the song is performed.

\*A recording of this song is on the enclosed Fisk Jubilee Singers CD entitled "**Rise, Shine!**"

\*\* A recording of this song is on the Fisk Jubilee Singers' CD: "**In Bright Mansions.**" This CD was previously distributed to schools attending HOT performances, and to school libraries state-wide.

# What is Choral Music?

**Objectives:** Students will discuss the characteristics of choral music to better understand the music of the Fisk Jubilee Singers.

**Preparation time:** 5 minutes

**Ask your students** what styles of music they enjoy.

- What is a choir? (a group of singers who perform songs written with two or more parts)
- Have you ever sung in a choir or in a school play or concert or church?
- Did you sing without recorded music or accompanying musical instruments? (*a cappella*)
- Do you enjoy this music? Why or why not?
- How is the music you listen to similar to choir music?

**Vocabulary Words:**

Choir, choral music, ensemble, musical director, conductor, a cappella, soprano, alto, tenor, bass.

**Share with students:**

The tradition of the Fisk Jubilee Singers is choral performance of the Negro spirituals. They usually sing a cappella or without any musical instruments (like piano, guitar, etc.). Choirs like the Fisk Jubilee Singers have a conductor, concertmaster or musical director. Since 1871, the Jubilee Singers have had 16 music directors. Mr. George L. White was the first. Mr. Paul Kwami is the current music director.

**Play RISE SHINE FOR THY LIGHT IS A'COMIN' (from Fisk Jubilee Singers CD: "Rise, Shine!")**

For younger students remind them to get their ears ready to listen and to open their minds and hearts as they prepare to listen.

**After** listening to this song, discuss the following questions:

- Did you like the song? Why or why not?
- How would you describe the music? How did the music make you feel?
- Did you hear any musical instruments? (Voices are musical instruments too!)
- How do the voices sound different from each other? (Some are higher, some are deeper)
- How does this song sound different from music you listen to at home? How is it similar?
- Do some of the voices remind you of a specific musical instrument other than a voice? Explain.

**Share with students:**

The different parts of the choir are soprano, alto, tenor, bass and sometimes baritone. Soprano is the highest female voice. Alto is the lowest female voice. Tenor refers to higher male voices. Bass refers to lower male voices.

**Play** the song again and listen for the different voices we have discussed. **Display** the chart and ask students to raise their hands when they hear different parts of the choir.

Soprano	highest female voice
Alto	lowest female voice
Tenor	higher male voice
Bass	lower male voice



# The Origins of Black Spirituals: Sing 'Till the Spirit Moves

**Objectives:** Students will discuss and listen to spirituals sung by the Fisk Jubilee Singers to identify the origin, styles, and content of the music.

**Preparation Time:** 60 minutes. Make copies of the Observation Sheets.

**Materials:** CD player, Fisk Jubilee Singer CDs: *In Bright Horizons* and *Rise, Shine!*, paper, pencils, books, Observation Sheets.

**Vocabulary Words:**  
spiritual, folk song,  
call-response style,  
slavery, oral tradition,  
Underground Railroad,  
rhythm, and tempo.

**Teacher Tip:** In order to have context for this lesson, discuss/review the American Civil War, slavery, and the Underground Railroad. For younger students, it would be helpful to share the picture book, *Follow the Drinking Gourd*. Other book ideas for younger students: *All Night, All Day: A Children's First Book of African American Spirituals* by Ashley Bryan; *Slave Spirituals and the Jubilee Singers* by Michael Cooper; or *From Slave Ship to Freedom* by Julius Lester and Robert Brown.



## Share with students:

In 1619, a Dutch ship arrived in Jamestown, VA, with twenty Africans who were quickly sold into slavery. This was the beginning of the African slave trade. Millions of men, women, and children were brought from different African countries for this purpose. With them, they brought many different customs, including musical traditions.

African Slaves in America learned European choral traditions and were introduced to Christianity. They sang in worship but also in the fields as they worked. It is from these foundations that Black spirituals developed. They were passed from generation to generation orally rather than in written form. A spiritual is a religious folk song. Spirituals can be happy or sad and often include references to the Bible or hidden messages about the Underground Railroad or a planned escape from slavery. Many spirituals referred to Old Testament stories, through which slaves identified with the "Hebrew Children" in their flight from bondage in Egypt.

The arrangement of lines and phrases in spirituals often includes a solo leader line that carries the theme and development, interrupted regularly by the chorus which repeats again and again the same refrain. This style, referred to as "call-response," has African origins. The four-part harmony also heard in spirituals is European.

The words in Black spirituals often were code words related to a means of escape including "chariot" or "train." "De Gospel Train" and "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" are such songs that relate directly to the Underground Railroad – an organization that helped many slaves flee to the North.

Six years after slavery ended in America, The Fisk Jubilee Singers went about preserving the traditions of spirituals by performing all over the northern states and in Europe and Asia. After this time, several composers began collecting the songs and writing them down in the form of sheet music. Spiritual music became very popular in America.



**Discuss the following questions with students:**

- What are times when we sing? (worship, birthdays, weddings, Christmas, funerals, other special holidays, patriotism) Are all of these events happy occasions? Explain.
- Are there songs you have been taught by someone in your family? Oral traditions are customs passed from generation to generation rather than being written down. Because the song or story is not written down, do you think it changes through time? Explain.

**Prepare students for listening to the music.** Ask them to get their ears ready to listen and to open their minds and hearts. Students should keep a journal of thoughts and questions that arise. If you have not grown up listening to this music, you may be surprised to learn how it has influenced the music you listen to everyday. It began in Africa and evolved in the United States as a reflection of the experiences of enslaved people, capturing their spirit and dreams.

**Listen to examples of spiritual songs** paying close attention to the tone, rhythm, tempo, style, and words in the song. Use the Observation Sheet after listening to each song to collect observations from the students in a class discussion.

**Suggested recordings of spirituals:**

From Fisk Jubilee Singers' CD: **Rise, Shine!** "Done Made My Vow to the Lord", "Ain't Got Time to Die." (Each of these selections will be performed in the March 11 concert for HOT.)

From Fisk Jubilee Singers CD: **In Bright Horizons:** "De Gospel Train", "Hold On," "Wade in the Water."

**For older students,** discuss the following questions as a class or ask students to respond through journal writing: Why do you think Black spiritual music is an important part of American history? What story does it tell? How do you think it affects us today? What can you tell about the slaves who sang these songs originally?



*ILLUSTRATION: Fisk 1899 Programme. Singers led by Frederick Loudin. Mary Llewellyn Jones of Swansea attended the concert. She belonged to the Caradog Choir and possibly attended with them, and kept the programme. Syd Jones of Swansea, her grandson aged 90, donated a copy of the Programme to the Women's Jazz Archive in 1999 (WJA collection).*



## Observation Sheet/Discussion Questions

Student's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

Song Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Describe the song: \_\_\_\_\_

What is the song about? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you think this song would be sung during worship or during work? Explain.

\_\_\_\_\_

Describe the style of the song. Circle all that apply:

Call-response

Syncopated

Sustained phrase

Is there a soloist? \_\_\_\_\_ If so, describe the soloist's voice:

\_\_\_\_\_

How many parts do you hear in the song? \_\_\_\_\_

Are there high and low parts? \_\_\_\_\_ Male and female voices? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you think this is a sad or happy song? \_\_\_\_\_ Explain.

\_\_\_\_\_

Do you like the song? \_\_\_\_\_ Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Does this remind you of another song you have heard in this unit or one you have heard at home, church, or at a live performance? Explain.

\_\_\_\_\_

# Call & Response Singing

## Objectives:

Students will listen to an example of call-response style singing and participate in a teacher-guided choral singing experience. **NOTE:** Students will be invited to sing along with the Fisk Jubilee Singers during the performance of this song.

**Materials:** CD Player, recording of "Down by the Riverside" (from Fisk Jubilee Singers *In Bright Mansions* CD)

## Share with students:

Spirituals have several different styles in terms of rhythm and structure. The call-response style has African origins. Voices take turns answering each other and repeating this pattern. The leader sings one verse and then the chorus answers with a refrain. "Down by the Riverside" is an example of a call-response song and will be featured in the March 11, 2010 performance for HOT.

## Prepare students for listening to the music.

Ask them to get their ears ready to listen and to open their minds and hearts. Play the recording on Fisk Jubilee Singers CD: *In Bright Mansions*.

**Sing a well-known call and response style spiritual.** Teach at least the response to the students by echo singing. Initially the instructor will sing the calls. You could vary this activity by dividing the class and having one section sing the call and the other the response, or perhaps use a student soloist on the call.

Excerpt from lesson plan by Melody Moore, "Call and Response Singing." LEARN North Carolina. Available on the web at: <http://www.learnnc.org/lp/pages/3815>

## Down By the Riverside

I'm gonna lay down my heavy load  
Down by the riverside  
Down by the riverside  
Down by the riverside  
I'm gonna lay down my heavy load  
Down by the riverside

I ain't gonna study war no more  
Down by the riverside  
Down by the riverside  
Down by the riverside  
I ain't gonna study war no more  
Down by the riverside

I'm gonna lay down my sword and shield  
Down by the riverside  
Down by the riverside  
Down by the riverside  
I'm gonna lay down my sword and shield  
Down by the riverside

I'm gonna lay down my travelin' shoes  
Down by the riverside  
Down by the riverside

Down by the riverside  
I'm gonna lay down my travelin' shoes  
Down by the riverside

I'm gonna lay down my gun and belt  
Down by the riverside  
Down by the riverside  
Down by the riverside  
I'm gonna lay down my gun and belt  
Down by the riverside

I'm gonna put on my long white robe  
Down by the riverside  
Down by the riverside  
Down by the riverside  
I'm gonna put on my long white robe  
Down by the riverside

I'm gonna put on my starry crown  
Down by the riverside  
Down by the riverside  
Down by the riverside  
I'm gonna put on my starry crown  
Down by the riverside

## A Portrait, A Legacy

In 1873 the original Fisk Jubilee Singers toured Europe. Queen Victoria was so deeply moved after hearing the singers perform, that she commissioned her court painter to paint a portrait of the group. The magnificent floor-to-ceiling painting is displayed in the historic Jubilee Hall at Fisk University.

Teachers! Look at this guidebook online to see the portrait in color.



Portrait of the Fisk Jubilee Singers, 1873, by Edmund Havel, commissioned by Queen Victoria, England. Printed with permission by the Fisk University Franklin Library's

### Discuss as a class:

- What is a portrait? What do all portraits include?
- What can you tell about the people in this portrait?
- What if a portrait came to life for just a short while? What would you want to ask the people? What would that person be able to tell us?
- If a portrait was created of your class, how would it be different? How would it be similar? How would your class pose? How would you dress? Imagine your class portrait is viewed 150 years from now. What do you think the viewers would say or think about you?

**Write about it:** Pretend for a moment that you are one of the singers in the above portrait. You have toured extensively in the United States, and are now enjoying a successful tour in Europe. You have broken down barriers of racism and hatred, but it hasn't been easy. While there, the Queen has asked you to sit for a painting that she has commissioned as a gift to the group! Write a letter home to your family describing your experiences and what you have gained/learned. Write in your journal. Describe the first day you performed in Europe, the day that you sang for the Queen, and the day you sat for your painting.

**Going Further:** Create your own class portrait, either with a camera, or as an art project.



## The Legacy of the Fisk Jubilee Singers

Fisk Jubilee Singers at the turn of the century from the Library of Congress Collection.

**Vocabulary Words:** Legacy  
According to Merriam-Webster, "something transmitted by or received from an ancestor or predecessor or from the past."

**Objectives:** Students will define the term "legacy" to understand better the legacy of the Fisk Jubilee Singers. **Preparation Time:** None. **Materials:** paper, pencil

### Share with students:

The songs of the Fisk Jubilee Singers encouraged white Americans to look at black Americans and their intellect in a different way, not as those who came from slavery and who suffered but those who shared a rich culture. The singers were and are talented and innovative and add enhancements to the art of harmony singing. This tradition has been passed down from the original singers to the current group.

Education and training have played an important role in the survival and proliferation of spiritual singing. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, teachers in rural and primary and secondary school classrooms routinely included the singing of spirituals in their curriculum. They stressed music and voice training as well as sight-reading. Mr. White, leader of the original Fisk Jubilee Singers, maintained the spirit and emotion of the music but added a more polished and grammatically correct style to it. This really transformed the music from folk music to concert music.

Today, musical director Paul Kwami expects high quality and self-discipline from the singers at all times. He encourages students to enunciate words in the songs so that the audience can understand clearly. There are frequent rehearsals in which students are expected to be on time and to be focused. Students are also required to audition each year.

Although they were often criticized - for overly refining the spirituals, for catering too much to White tastes, for looking to the North for support, and for being too assertive about equal rights - the Fisk Jubilee Singers paved the way for future professional and semi-professional Black religious singing groups. Many Negro colleges were inspired by Fisk to start their own jubilee groups and drew upon directors trained at Fisk to staff their programs. By the 1920's, concert performances by African American jubilee ensembles were so popular that record companies identified a market for this music and begun recording them.

**Discuss these questions as a class or encourage students to respond to these questions in their journals:**

- What does it mean for something to have a legacy?
- Do you think the Fisk Jubilee Singers have a legacy? What is that legacy?
- What other people or groups do you think have left a legacy? Explain.
- What does it take for something to last as long as the Fisk Jubilee Singers have?
- How has this music influenced music you hear everyday?
- Do you hear any similarities between the spiritual singing that you have heard from the Fisk Jubilee Singers and the music you listen to at home, church or elsewhere? Explain.



The 2009 Fisk Jubilee Singers with Director Paul Kwami.



## Web Links


**Teachers Note:** In addition to these Web sources, the [In Bright Mansions](#) CD contains excellent interactive files with educational content, accessed by inserting the disc in a computer CD-ROM drive.

An online version of this guidebook allows students and teachers to click the links throughout and immediately access listed websites.


<http://www.tpac.org/education/hot/guidebooks.asp>

Official website of Fisk University, including information on the school's history and Jubilee Day:  
[www.fisk.edu](http://www.fisk.edu)


Official website of the Fisk Jubilee Singers:  
[www.fiskjubileesingers.org](http://www.fiskjubileesingers.org)




Website from the PBS Jubilee Singers: Sacrifice and Glory program, including teacher's guide to the film and pages with interactive audio files:  
[www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/singers/tguide/index.html](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/singers/tguide/index.html)




Lesson plans on the role of the spirituals in African American history and religion, for grades 9-12, on a website supported by the National Endowment for the Humanities:  
[http://edsitement.neh.gov/view\\_lesson\\_plan.asp?id=318](http://edsitement.neh.gov/view_lesson_plan.asp?id=318)




University of Denver multi-media educational website about the spirituals:  
<http://ctl.du.edu/spirituals/>




A short lesson plan about spirituals using a quote from Frederick Douglass, lyrics and audio files:  
[http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/learning\\_history/spirituals/spirituals\\_menu.cfm](http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/learning_history/spirituals/spirituals_menu.cfm)



Page on the University of New Mexico Teachers' Institute site entitled "Why Study African American Music? United States History Unit," which includes content about the spirituals:  
<http://www.unm.edu/~abqteach/music/02-05-08.htm>



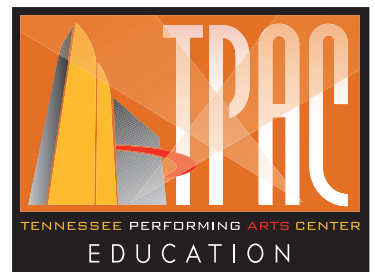
A study of call and response singing, especially as it relates to African-American spirituals, including a lesson plan for grades 4–5 Music Education.  
Melody Moore, "Call and Response Singing." LEARN North Carolina. Available on the web at:  
<http://www.learnnc.org/lp/pages/3815>





**The famous painting of the Fisk Jubilee Singers commissioned by Queen Victoria is displayed in Fisk University's Jubilee Hall.**





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