

TEACHER STUDY GUIDE

Black Violin



- Curriculum Connections
- Performance Background
- Activities for the Classroom
- Learning Resources

Alaska Junior Theater is a private, nonprofit organization that has been bringing the best in professional theater from around the world to Alaska's young audiences since 1981. Each year, more than 40,000 students attend a variety of live performances at the Alaska Center for the Performing Arts. For many students, our school show presentations are their only exposure to live performing arts.

Each show we present has a strong educational component, and shows are linked to Alaska Content Standards. Alaska Junior Theater also offers teacher and student workshops, study guides, and classroom transportation to our performances.

We are committed to keeping ticket prices low, allowing children of all financial levels to experience professional, live theater. Our low educational ticket price of \$6 covers only half our costs of presenting shows. To subsidize the remaining \$6 of each ticket, we actively fundraise and rely on the support of corporations, foundations and individuals. In addition, we fundraise to offer full scholarships to students with financial need.

Alaska Junior Theater asked area teachers to review our 2008–2009 performances for direct connections to Alaska Content Standards. The direct connections for *Black Violin* are listed to the right, which will assist in lesson planning and will assure teachers that Alaska Junior Theater programs help classes meet curriculum connections.

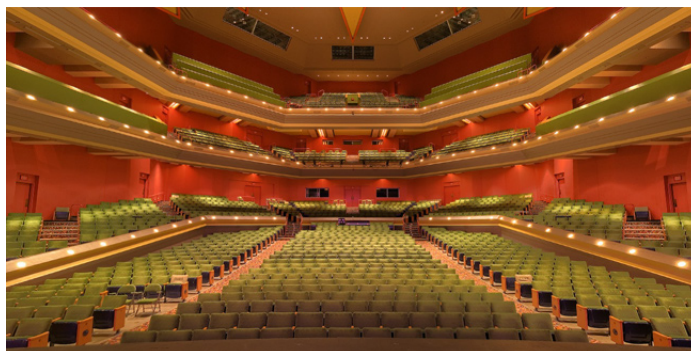
To get a complete copy of the Alaska Content Standards, visit the following web address: www.eed.state.ak.us/contentstandards. Additional information about these standards can be found at the National Association for Music Education via <http://www.menc.org/resources/view/national-standards-for-music-education>.

Alaska Junior Theater sends a special thanks to teacher Dawn Wilcox, principals Diane Hoffbauer and Tina Johnson-Harris, and ASD Music Supervisor Frank Hauser for their help in this effort.



Lorene Harrison Lobby

Alaska Content Standards	
Cultural Standards	B 1
Arts	B 2, 4, 5, 6, 8 C 4, 5 D 6
National Standards for Music Education	6, 7, 8, 9

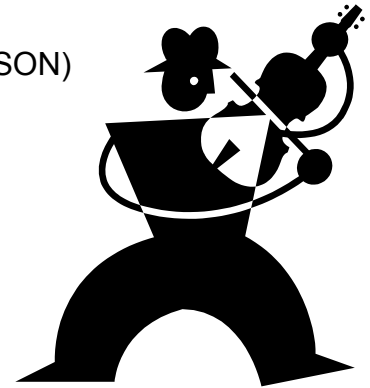


View from the Atwood Concert Hall Stage

The following items are available through Anchorage Public Library

Picture Books:

- This Jazz Man* by Karen Erhardt (E EHRHARD)
Lift Every Voice and Sing by James Weldon Johnson (E JOHNSON)
Across the Alley by Richard Michelson (E MICHELS)
Charlie Parker Played Be Bop by Christopher Raschka (E RASCHKA)
Sweet Music in Harlem by Debbie A. Taylor (E TAYLOR)



Chapter Books:

- Yolonda's Genius* by Carol Fenner (J FENNER)
Second Fiddle, or, How to Tell a Blackbird from a Sausage by Siobhàn Parkinson (J PARKINS)
The Minstrel's Melody by Eleanora E. Tate (J TATE)

Teen Fiction:

- Harlem Hustle* by Janet McDonald (Y MCDONALD)
The Mozart Season by Virginia Euwer Wolff (Y WOLFF)
Sky: A Novel in 3 Sets and an Encore by Roderick Townley (Y TOWNLEY)
Good Enough by Paula Yoo (Y YOO)

Non-Fiction on African Americans in Music:

- Music* by Angela Medearis (J 780.8996073 MEDEARI)
I See the Rhythm by Toyomi Igus (J 780.8996073 WOOD)
The Louis Armstrong You Never Knew by James Lincoln Collier (J 781.65092 COLLIER)
Hush Songs: African American Lullabies (J 782.421582 HUSH-SO)
Slave Spirituals and the Jubilee Singers by Michael L. Cooper (J 782.42162 COOPER)
Lift Every Voice and Sing: A Pictorial Tribute to the Negro National Anthem by James Weldon Johnson (J 782.42164 JOHNSON)
Walk Together Children: Black American Spirituals by Ashley Bryan (J 783.67 BRYAN)
Ellington Was Not a Street by Ntozake Shange (J 811.54 SHANGE)
Duke Ellington: The Piano Prince and His Orchestra by Andrea Davis Pinkney (J 921 ELLINGT PINKNEY)
Tupac Shakur by Nathan Olson (J 921 SHAKUR OLSON)
Bessie Smith by Alexandria Manera (J 921 SMITH MANERA)

Non-Fiction on Violins:

- Music* by Neil Ardley (J 784.19 ARDLEY 2004)
The Violin; An Introduction to the Instrument by Bill Ballantine (J 787 BAL)
The Violin Book by Melvin Berger (J 787 BERGER)
The Violin Close Up by Peter Schaaf (J 787.1 SCHAAF)
The Master ViolinMaker by Paul Fleisher (J 787.21923 FLEISHE)

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.

These two gentlemen, Kev Marcus and Wil-B along with their DJ TK have created the ultimate synergy between classical and Hip-Hop music, and with it an incredible opportunity to reach young children. 'Black Violin' captivated the audience in Harlem and clinched the Showtime at the Apollo 2005 Legend title. Black Violin's notoriety has risen with their amazing performance accompanying Alicia Keys at the 2004 Billboard Awards, and by performing on the same bill with some of the industry's biggest artists. Such artists include Aerosmith, The Eagles, Stevie Nicks, Linkin Park, 50 Cent, Lloyd Banks, Kanye West, Nas, Fabolous, Ciara, Fat Joe, Lil Wayne, and Tony Touch. The duo also are 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 ardor 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.

They have been given an Award by the Brooklyn Center for Performing Arts for their Outstanding Contributions to Middle & High School Performing Arts Students. Kev Marcus, and Wil B, both graduates of Dillard Performing Arts High School, 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.

Wil-B



Wil-B 'Simply Sick' age 26, attended Dillard High School of Performing Arts, and attempted to join the school band in an effort to play the saxophone. At the age of 13, he was mistakenly put into the string program instead of the band; but 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. He attended Florida State University. Not only is this young man talented on the violin but he also can sing, play the piano, drums, trumpet and the 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



The second master of this unique duo, Kev Marcus age 26, also attended Dillard High School of Performing Arts. He was encouraged by his mother and teachers at the age of nine to begin playing the violin. From there he grew so intrigued by it that he couldn't let it go. He also began to participate with the local pop orchestras and was also a semi-finalist in the Sphinx National Competition for Blacks and Latino's 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.



Track Listing from "Black Violin"

1. Brandenburg
2. Jammin'
3. Sleepin'
4. No Words
5. Don't Wanna Lose You
6. Dirty Orchestra
7. All for U
8. Chance
9. My Story
10. I'm a Ryder
11. Get Down
12. Inspiration
13. Fanfare
14. Good Music
15. Missing U
16. Gypsy

Liner Notes from "Black Violin"

Brandenburg

To backbone this first track, we paired two significant musical movements by blending classical music with hip-hop. The original piece, Brandenburg Concerto No. 3, was written by Joahannes Sebastian Bach and is a standard piece in an intermediate string musician's repertoire. Our interpretation changes the listener's perspective of a composition that most violinists usually performed to its intended tune. This idea developed quickly once we chose the right piece. We altered the form, from the introduction to its chorus to the breakdowns. Wil then mapped out the beat and our piece really came to life.

Jammin'

A television producer from the hit CBS show *CSI New York* contacted Black Violin about performing on an episode. The premise was a juxtaposition of Puccini's "Madama Butterfly" performed in an opera house and featuring BV playing their brand of music on a NYC subway. Black Violin arranged the Puccini piece for a string group of 4 instead of a pit orchestra of 40 and put together an instrumental version of Jammin.' After the *CSI New York* episode aired, we decided to revamp the tune with a hook and fast riffs throughout the piece.

Sleepin'

Some people are not in tune with the sounds of a violin. It is uncharted territory to their listening ears. So we decided to dedicate a song to those that "sleep" on Black Violin's music. Most of our records develop very quickly once we have the beat and the format figured out. Wil played the beat and Kev wrote the hook and the song was completed within a matter of hours. The string solos were improvised as all the solos were on the album. These solos were intended to mimic the cadences of rappers and singers. Tune in.

No Words

The song has all live instrumentation throughout to support the Temptations sample. We started out with the beat and the sample, and then recorded our improv solos on top, going from high to low starting with violin, then viola, then the cello by collaborator Joe Cello, and finally a full orchestra arrangement by Alfredo. When you listen to the sample, you'll hear that the sample follows this model. We also aimed the record to build as it went along so we had a collaborator friend named Breakdown record drums on the track to keep it funky. We got Richi Bravo to play all the percussion on the record and the song would be nothing without the live bass throughout the track performed by Leo Brooks. This song represents all of what Black Violin is and everything we're not.



My Story

For our debut album, we felt strongly about telling our story through our own words on one special track. Recording a vocal contribution was a step outside our artistic comfort zone. With the beat playing on repeat for inspiration, we both wrote our verses in silence. Kev's verse represents his proud upbringing and the good people that have influenced his life. DJ TK then cuts the lyric "This is my story" into the track as the chorus. Wil's verse represents the struggles endured throughout his life and the many lessons he learned throughout his journey while overcoming these adversities. Each of the instruments used were tuned down a half step to match the pitch of the sample. To close out the track, we added a brief duet that reflects on our respective life stories and fades out on a viola solo performed by Wil.

About the Musical Components

"Brandenburg" quotes from J.S. Bach's Brandenburg Concerto no. 3 movement 1, part of a group of six works widely held as the most influential and finest compositions of the Baroque period. In 1721, Bach presented a series of six concerti to the Margrave of Brandenburg, who then put these great works on the shelf where they sat until the 19th Century. Bach wrote each concerto, often requiring virtuosos to play the solos, for a different combination of instruments. No. 3 was composed for three violins, three violas, three cellos, and basso continuo, while No. 6 does not use a violin at all!

"Dirty Orchestra," utilizes fugues and counterpoints. A fugue is a composition tool in which one instrument plays a short melody, then another instrument echoes the piece, then another echoes, and so on, with all parts interweaving into each other. Counterpoints in music mean that two corresponding melodies are played at the same time.

"Gypsy" takes its cue in the Romani musical tradition that has influenced classical music since Bach and Haydn, and particularly Liszt, Dvorák, and Bartók (and, in turn, the local musical traditions influence the

music and style of the gypsies living there. For example, in Spain, they are known for Flamenco). The Roma are a nomadic people, originally from India, and have migrated westward for the past two thousand years (they picked up the name "gypsy" in the 1500s because it was believed they were from Egypt). Romani music is most associated with the violin and song, incorporating changes in tempo, slides in notes and pitches, energy, and soul.

The role of the DJ

Hip-Hop DJs cut and loop beats to recreate music. They also pause, scratch, backspin, speed up or slow down, and/or delay the music. In its simplest form, cutting would involve cutting a few bars of the beat and looping it to create a continuous sound. In the beginning of turntablism, DJs would have two identical records. When the first record finished playing the song's "break," or an interlude in the music in which everything stops except the percussion, the DJ stops playing that record and plays the second record at the break. The DJ would set the first record back to the break and play that once the second record finished, and continue this indefinitely.

Pre-Show Activities

Play a piece of violin music and ask the students to either draw or write (or both) whatever comes to mind while they are listening to it.

Bring in a violin and/or a viola to show your students and point out the various parts of the instrument. Have a student studying the instrument play for the class.

Research Projects: Have the students, either alone or in groups, research the different topics and make a presentation to the class:

- 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

- Why antique violins are so desirable; Why Stradivarius instruments are highly valued

- The importance of varnish on acoustic violins

Have the students write a comparative essay on the topic of “Acoustic violins versus Electric violins.”

Make a poster advertising either an acoustic violin or an electric violin.

Have the students write a persuasive essay that is either for or against combining different types of music, such as, but not limited to, classical and hip-hop.

Create an Internet treasure hunt. Make a list of questions about classical music and hip-hop. Topics can include facts about composers, and hip-hop songs that have sampled classical music (for ideas, visit:

http://www.stylusmagazine.com/articles/staff_top_10/top-ten-classical-music-samples-in-hip-hop.htm)

Post-Show Activities

Discussion Questions

Which songs did you recognize during the performance (both pop/hip-hop and classical)?

What did you think of the music? Did the different styles mesh effectively and sound harmonious, or was it more jarring and discordant?

If you have been to a traditional classical music concert and/or hip-hop concert, how did this compare? What were the differences? What were the similarities?

Write a five paragraph descriptive essay about the performance.



Music training helps under-achievers. In Rhode Island, researchers studied eight public school first grade classes. Half of the classes became “test arts” groups, receiving ongoing music and visual arts training. In kindergarten, this group had lagged behind in scholastic performance. After seven months, the students were given a standardized test. The “test arts” group had caught up to their fellow students in reading and surpassed their classmates in math by 22 percent. In the second year of the project, the arts students widened this margin even further. Students were also evaluated on attitude and behavior. Classroom teachers noted improvement in these areas also.

Source: Nature May 23, 1996



High school music students score higher on SATs in both verbal and math than their peers. In 2001, SAT takers with coursework/experience in music performance scored 57 points higher on the verbal portion of the test and 41 points higher on the math portion than students with no coursework/experience in the arts.

Source: Profile of SAT and Achievement Test Takers, The College Board, compiled by Music Educators National Conference, 2001.



A ten-year study, tracking more than 25,000 students, shows that music-making improves test scores. Regardless of socioeconomic background, music-making students get higher marks in standardized tests than those who had no music involvement. The test scores studied were not only standardized tests, such as the SAT, but also in reading proficiency exams.

Source: Dr. James Catterall, UCLA, 1997



Music majors are the most likely group of college grads to be admitted to medical school. Physician and biologist Lewis Thomas studied the undergraduate majors of medical school applicants. He found that 66 percent of music majors who applied to med school were admitted, the highest percentage of any group. For comparison, (44 percent) of biochemistry majors were admitted. Also, a study of 7,500 university students revealed that music majors scored the highest reading scores among all majors including English, biology, chemistry and math.

Sources: “The Comparative Academic Abilities of Students in Education and in Other Areas of a Multi-focus University,” Peter H. Wood, ERIC Document No. ED327480
“The Case for Music in the Schools,” Phi Delta Kappan, February, 1994



The world’s top academic countries place a high value on music education. Hungary, Netherlands and Japan stand atop worldwide science achievement and have strong commitment to music education. All three countries have required music training at the elementary and middle school levels, both instrumental and vocal, for several decades. The centrality of music education to learning in the top-ranked countries seems to contradict the United States’ focus on math, science, vocabulary, and technology.

Source: 1988 International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IAEEA) Test



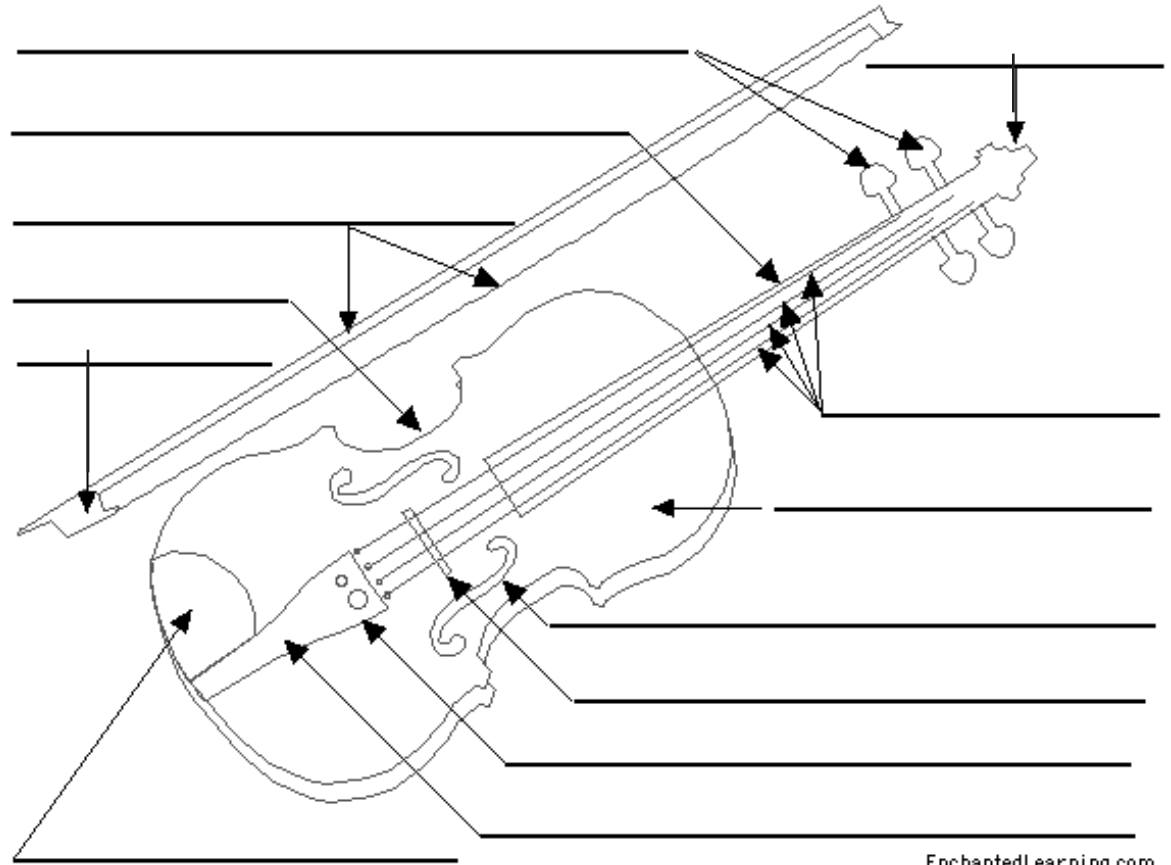
College-age musicians are emotionally healthier than their non-musician counterparts. A study conducted at the University of Texas looked at 362 students who were in their first semester of college. They were given three tests, measuring performance anxiety, emotional concerns and alcohol related problems. In addition to having fewer battles with the bottle, researchers also noted that the college-aged music students seemed to have surer footing when facing tests.

Source: Houston Chronicle, January 11, 1998

The Anatomy of the Violin

Word Bank

- bridge
- body
- bow
- chin rest
- F-hole
- fine tuners
- fingerboard
- four strings
- frog
- scroll
- tail piece
- tuning pegs
- waist

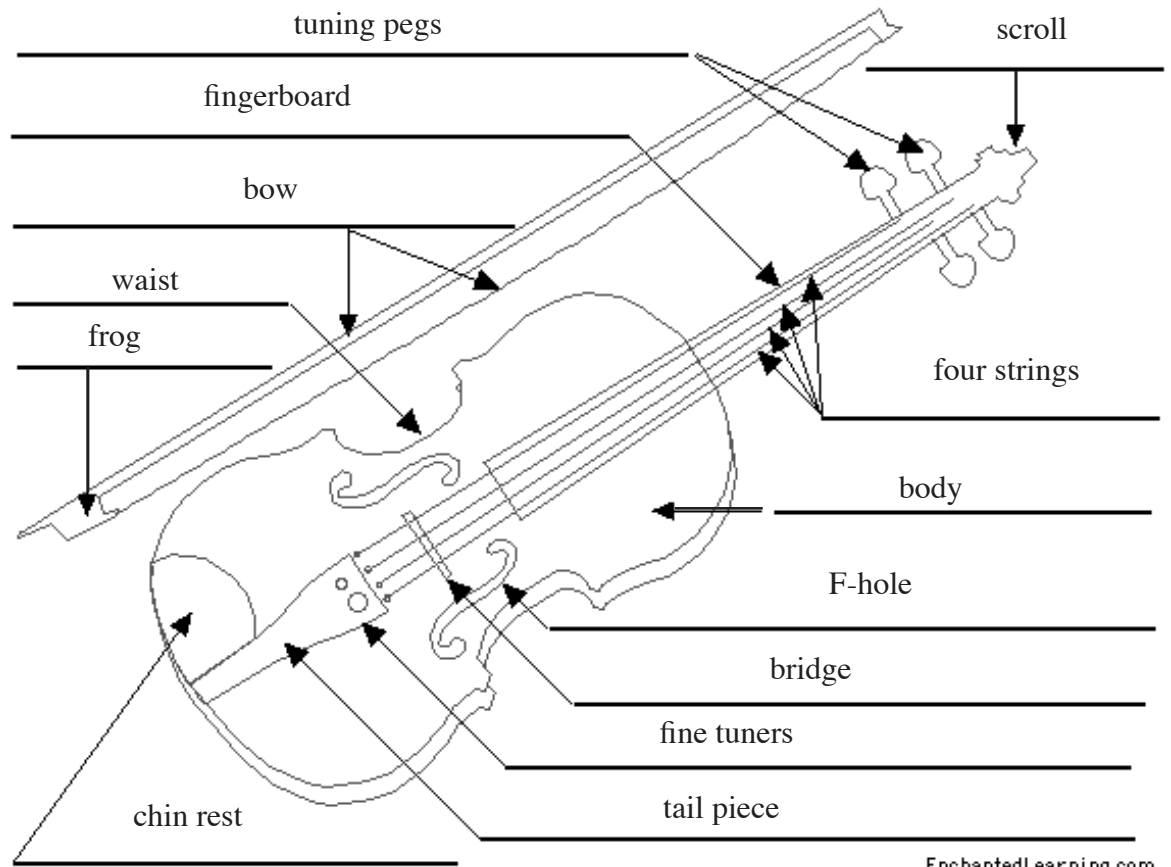


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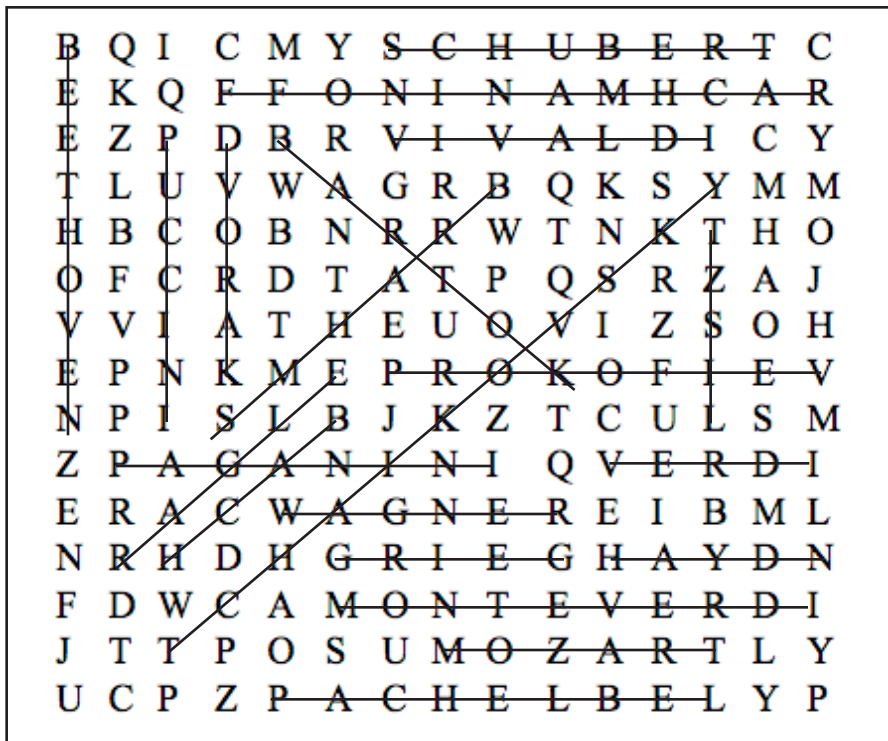
Composers Word Search

B	Q	I	C	M	Y	S	C	H	U	B	E	R	T	C	BACH	RACHMANINOFF
E	K	Q	F	F	O	N	I	N	A	M	H	C	A	R	BARTOK	SCHUBERT
E	Z	P	D	B	R	V	I	V	A	L	D	I	C	Y	BEETHOVEN	TCHAIKOVSKY
T	L	U	V	W	A	G	R	B	Q	K	S	Y	M	M	BRAHMS	VERDI
H	B	C	O	B	N	R	R	W	T	N	K	T	H	O	DVORAK	VIVALDI
O	F	C	R	D	T	A	T	P	Q	S	R	Z	A	J	ELGAR	WAGNER
V	V	I	A	T	H	E	U	O	V	I	Z	S	O	H	GRIEG	
E	P	N	K	M	E	P	R	O	K	O	F	I	E	V	HAYDN	
N	P	I	S	L	B	J	K	Z	T	C	U	L	S	M	LISZT	
Z	P	A	G	A	N	I	N	I	Q	V	E	R	D	I	MONTEVERDI	
E	R	A	C	W	A	G	N	E	R	E	I	B	M	L	MOZART	
N	R	H	D	H	G	R	I	E	G	H	A	Y	D	N	PACHELBEL	
F	D	W	C	A	M	O	N	T	E	V	E	R	D	I	PAGANINI	
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The Anatomy of the Violin



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Composers Word Search