

Program Name: Blues in Concert: Music from the Harlem Renaissance

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Artist: Lemuel Sheppard

## Special Requirements:

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Large, open performance space; electrical outlet nearby; one chair.

## Special Points of Interest:

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“The white artist had to change society to accept it, the black artist had to change society to be accepted”

-David Levering Lewis

## Performance Description

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This journey through the 20th Century Jazz world uses music, poetry, art and commentary.

By focusing on the Harlem Renaissance participants who have roots in Kansas and Missouri, students will understand that the Harlem Renaissance was truly national in scope.

Accompanying himself on guitar and banjo, Lem Sheppard performs Blues, Jazz, Spirituals, music from the African theater and original arrangements.

The Harlem Renaissance was known for exposing America, and the world, to the arts, culture and intellect of African Americans. Ironically, this time was also known

as the dark ages because of the government’s lack of response to civil rights and social equality issues facing African Americans. Where politics, religion, society and the courts had failed, art would fill the void. It was believed that the appreciation of high art would elevate the people.

The artists who came to Harlem during this time all worked with similar themes. They hoped to create a body of work that would communicate issues such as ethnic identity and relationships between black and white America.

## Educational Objectives & Standards

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### Students will:

- Learn the importance of oral and musical tradition in the forming of a peoples’ culture and life style
- Be introduced to traditional African American folklore and cultural heritage

### Standards addressed:

- **Behavioral Studies:** Knows how a culture’s art works and artifacts reflect its values and beliefs
- **Music:** Identifies, by genre or style, music from various historical periods and cultures

## Artist Bio: Lemuel Sheppard

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A renowned performer and scholar of American and African-American folk music and blues, Lemuel Sheppard tours nationally and internationally. Mr. Sheppard has presented lectures and performances throughout the country under the auspices of the Kansas Arts Commission, Arts Midwest, Mid-America Arts Alliance, UNESCO, and the U.S. Embassy. He was recently inducted into the Blues Hall of Fame in Oklahoma. Mr. Sheppard composed

and performed the soundtrack to the PBS documentary *Black, White & Brown* on the 50th anniversary of Brown vs. the Topeka Board of Education, and his CD *Urbanfolk* was featured on NPR's online contemporary music show *Open Mic*.

Mr. Sheppard recently completed a tour of his new show *I've Seen Rivers*, consisting of original music based on the life of York, the slave who traveled with Lewis and Clark.

### List of Resources:

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#### Books:

“Black Music in the Harlem Renaissance: A Collection of Essays”

By Samuel A. Floyd  
N.Y.: Greenwood Press,  
1990

“The New Negro”

By Alain Locke  
N.Y.: Atheneum, 1986

“The Souls of Black Folks”

By W.E.B. Dubois  
1903

#### Online Resources:

[www.si.umich.edu/CHICO/Harlem/index.html](http://www.si.umich.edu/CHICO/Harlem/index.html)

<http://howard.edu/library/Art@Howard/HUCollection/Index.htm>

Contact KCYA for more information about this and other programs

816.531.4022  
KCYA.org

### Vocabulary

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**Black and Tan Clubs:** night clubs where people of all races freely mixed with one another.

**Call & Response:** the roots of Jazz go back to this method of performing. A soloist sings a phrase and the group then repeats the phrase back.

**Harmony:** the accompaniment the melody.

**Improvise:** to spontaneously create new melodies to a determined musical structure.

**Melody:** the lead party in a song either sung by a vocalist or played by an instrument.

**Rhythm:** the beat or pulse of the music.

### Post-Performance Activities

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1. Watch *Jazz, a Film by Ken Burns*. Discuss the social, cultural, and historical conditions in which Jazz music developed.

2. Listen to Jazz recordings of notable Jazz performers such as Ella Fitzgerald, Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Billie Holiday, Thelonious Monk, and Charlie Parker. Try to trace the origins of their particular *styles*. Can you hear unique styles, such as Kansas City Jazz or Dixieland?

3. Explore other forms of Jazz music such as Scat Singing, Ragtime, Dixieland, and Bebop.

4. Discover your local blues and jazz heritage by visiting the American Jazz Museum in the historic 18th & Vine District.

