An interview with Paige Hernandez

What is your role in the show?

I am the creator. I also essentially produce and direct it and I curate the play list for the evening or for any given Liner Notes performance.

What was the genesis of this show?

The genesis of the show was having a conversation with my husband, Kris Funn, who also plays upright bass in the show. We are both lovers of hip hop and I guess I can say we are old school hip hop lovers, ‘80s and ‘90s. And we had a conversation over dinner that we don’t get to see quality live hip-hop shows anymore — hip hop with full instrumentation, with a full band. And something that’s multigenerational that you can enjoy with your grandparents, parents, nieces, nephews and grandchildren.

We started Liner Notes in 2012, and essentially we wanted to see connections between jazz and funk and R&B from the ‘60s and ‘70s and how they have informed hip hop mostly through the idea of sampling, which hip hop created — where you take something old and remake it into something new. You remix it.

How is the show structured? Do you go through a chronological hip-hop’s history or do you mix and match?

The show features my husband Kris’ jazz quintet, which is called the CornerStore, with myself and Baye Harrell. We are the lyricists and we are also the performers. What makes the show unique is that we actually read the liner notes, song, theatre we are performing. So those are the notes in the album or record...we read them aloud like theatre, a dramatic reading. And we have a vocalist and singer. Her name is Akua Allrich.

What do we do is cover almost 50 songs or 50 pairings over the course of a performance. It’s not necessarily chronological but it is thematic. For example, we can have a theme on Civil Rights, or a general overview of hip-hop. We can have a theme on jazz and funk or R&B. And something that’s multigenerational that you can enjoy with your grandparents, parents, nieces, nephews and grandchildren.

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What is the show about?

The show is about celebrating a theme, a show through the idea of sampling, which hip hop created — where you take something old and remake it into something new. You remix it.

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How do you bridge that gap and get younger audiences interested in hip-hop pioneers, classic hip-hop songs and hip hop’s greatest lyricists?

The show does a great job in mixing a little bit of something for everybody. We still have references for them and we do songs for them. We have done Kendrick Lamar, Drake, Rihanna and whoever is out there currently that we can bring to life in the music. We mix that in with our favorites. And they take a deeper look at the ones we like and usually they are familiar with it. They may not know it necessarily but they like the vibe or they have heard of Tribe or Digable Planets or Lil Kim. It’s an educational, history experience for them.

Is there a particular person in hip hop who has inspired you?

An interview with Paige Hernandez at about hip hop today

It’s tricky and complicated. I am a b-girl, which means once upon a time, I used to be a break dancer. And then I just try to try to take each element from hip hop: I also MC and I do a little DJing and graffiti. That’s to say I am in love with the culture and its evolution, no matter how varied it looks. I am just in love with it.

It’s interesting to see how hip hop has morphed and it’s growing pains because it still feels young to me. So I am not as invested as I was probably 20 years ago but I haven’t stopped listening to it. I still listen to it. I try to keep my ear to the ground to what’s current and what’s happening. And there are guilty pleasures. I always tell my students I love Cardi B. They are really surprised to hear that. But anytime I see someone in the culture living their truth or who have a platform that didn’t typically have that, that really excites me because that’s what hip hop is for and I can get behind that.

I think Nicki Minaj is a brilliant performer and you can tell she was a theater major. I can see that. You can tell with her voice changes and her expressions. She really capitalizes on that.

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## Liner Notes

### Prepare for the performance
- **Teacher Focus**: Introduce Paige Hernandez and Liner Notes with the NPR audio of The NPR GLT interview with Paige Hernandez. (Link below)
  - If you have...
    - 10 minutes: Play 'Excerpt of the GLT Interview with Paige Hernandez'. Use questions in the student section as a springboard for discussion.
    - 20 minutes: Play 'The entire GLT interview with Paige Hernandez'. Use questions in the student section as a springboard for discussion.
- **Content Link**: wgbh.org/post/tv/mini-episode-hip-hop-bridge-generational-gap-hms1/s
  - Credit: GLT NPR anything

### Experience the performance
- **Teacher Focus**: During the performance, ask students to take a mental note of any song they recognize because it was sampled from a song familiar to them.
- **Student Activity**: While watching Liner Notes, consider the following:
  - During the performance, are there any songs you recognize because they are sampled in a song you've heard before?
  - Compare recorded hip hop music to live hip hop music. How are they the same? How are they different?

### Reflect, respond and read
- **Teacher Focus**: Offer students a chance to discuss the questions asked in the 'Experience the Performance' section.
- **Student Activity**: Write about how this live hip-hop performance compared to listening to hip-hop music.
  - What elements are the same?
  - What elements are different?
  - How did everyone on stage work together to produce Liner Notes?

### Focus
- **Teacher Focus**: Introduce music sampling and copyright law with the NPR audio of Digital Music Sampling: Creativity or Criminality? (Link below)
  - If you have...
    - 10 minutes: Play up to [4:15] and use questions in the student section as a springboard for discussion.
    - 20 minutes: Play up to [8:15] and use questions in the student section as a springboard for discussion.
    - 30 minutes: Play up to [15:11] and use questions in the student section as a prompt for a written response.
- **Content Link**: npr.org/2011/01/28/133306353/Digital-Music-Sampling-Creativity-Or-Criminality
  - Credit: NPR, www.npr.org

### Originate
- **Teacher Focus**: Ask students to work together in small groups to create new music that features a sample from a popular song.
  - Grades 6-8:
    - Write new lyrics to be featured over a sample of a song's verse and chorus.
  - Grades 9-12:
    - Write new lyrics to be featured over a sample of a song's verse and chorus.

### Rehearse
- **Teacher Focus**: Continue to practice your song with your group. Ensure everyone in your group knows the song lyrics and what part of the sample you are using in your song.
- **Student Activity**: Write liner notes to communicate information about the artists and what the song is about. Select a name for your new music band and be sure to give credit to the artist(s) whose music you sampled. If time allows, create an album cover for your new song.

### Make magic
- **Teacher Focus**: In a formal or informal setting, have students present their creations to one another.
  - Grades 6-8:
    - Encourage students to listen to one another carefully in order to identify the original source of their song sample.
  - Grades 9-12:
    - Show Time! It is now time to share your work! Before sharing your new music, introduce the name of your song and the artists that helped produce it. At the end of your presentation, share your liner notes and where your sample came from. Be creative, clear, and have fun!

### NJ Student Learning Standards

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<tr>
<th>Social Studies</th>
<th>Visual &amp; Performing Arts</th>
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**Questions for Student Reflection**
- Do you think sampling inspires creativity (an art form for creating new music) or criminality (stealing an artist's original work)?
- Do you think people should be able to sample other artist's work without consequence?
- Are there any songs you know that sample music from another artist?
- How can sampling help bridge generational gaps?
- Do you think sampling inspires creativity (an art form for creating new music) or criminality (stealing an artist's original work)?
- Do you think people should be able to sample other artist's work without consequence?
New Jersey Student Learning Standards

English Language Arts

NJSLSA.W.6. Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of formal and informal presentations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

NJSLSA.S.3. Evaluate a speaker’s point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric.

NJSLSA.W.2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the use of well-chosen details and descriptive language.

NJSLSA.S.4. Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

NJSLSA.W.7. Conduct analyses of issues and events using the most effective mediums and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

NJSLSA.W.1. Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substance or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

NJSLSA.W.8. Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work collaboratively to address the challenges that are significant to themselves and others.

Find the Standards
For more detailed information on the standards, visit these websites:
NJ English Language Arts
nj deped ed special/ccc / saas/aets
NJ Social Studies Standards
state.nj.us/education/cccs/ss/ssa
NJ World Language Standards
nj deped ed special/ccc / lpsa/wl
NJ Arts Standards
state.nj.us/education/cccs/aap/ccc/wl
National Arts Standards
nationalartsstandards.org

Current State of Hip Hop Today

With the ascendency of superstar artists like Drake, Kanye West and Nicki Minaj, music critics have seen evidence of a shift in musical trends, a meaningful change in mainstream music consumption. Hip-hop or rap is now the dominant popular music of our era, supplanting rock and roll and even pop.

“Rap has been king for the better part of the past few decades—the younger the generation, the more its total immersion in rap— but only in 2017 do we see it officially crowned as music’s most popular genre,” wrote Frank Guan in the 2017 New York Magazine article. “Rap’s supremacy is more than just commercial. Its cadences, inflections, and tones are everywhere in new music; infiltrating country, swallowing R&B, and pervading pop.”

The numbers bear this out. Nielsen’s year-end report for 2017 noted that hip hop/R&B was the year’s overwhelmingly dominant music, with seven of the top 10 most-consumed albums coming from that genre. Much of this growth was driven by a whopping 72 percent jump in online streaming. These top albums came from artists such as Kendrick Lamar, Drake, Post Malone, and Migos, among others.

Hip hop’s ubiquity was underscored when Kendrick Lamar was awarded the prestigious Pulitzer Prize for Music in 2018 for his album Damn. It was the first time a rapper was presented with this honor.

While hip hop dominates popular music, emerging artists have been testing its conventions and rebelling against mainstream rap’s polished, slick image with a punk, emo edge. In the summer of 2017, The New York Times declared: “Hip Hop’s Punk Moment Has Arrived.”

This new rap music, which has been cultivated on streaming platforms such as SoundCloud, sounds fuzzy, distorted, rough, decidedly lo-fi and unpolished. Instead of aggressive masculine posturing and boastful lyrics, many of these artists rap about depression, suicidal thoughts, sedatives like Xanax — along with more typical rap subjects like cars, luxury goods and women. There’s less emphasis on lyrical mastery and more on mumbling, grungy vocals. These new rappers not only cite top rappers as influences but they are also steeped in the work of rock bands like Nirvana, Green Day and Marilyn Manson.

Artists that are emblematic of this trend are XXXTentacion, Lil Uzi Vert, Lil Peep and Ski Mask the Slump God. These new rappers’ concerts even resemble old school rock events. People thrash to the music in wild mosh pits with rappers crowd surfing or jumping from balconies into the arms of their fans.

“It is hard to ignore the similarities between SoundCloud rap and the first wave of punk: the sonic simplicity, glib mean sarcasm and sense of transgression,” wrote Rachel Areoeh in a Guardian article in 2018.

With this new wave of “mumble rap,” some more lyrically-minded rap artists such as Snoop Dogg and Eminem have expressed befuddlement and disdain for this new movement which rejects many of hip hop’s cherished conventions. Some critics have dismissed SoundCloud or mumble rap as an ephemeral trend that will be over soon. Other rap artists have been forging different paths, remaking and remixing genres and exploiting new technologies to get their music heard more widely.

The most prominent recent example is the rise of Lil Nas X and his chart-topping song, “Old Town Road,” which originally appeared in the video app, TikTok. Hip hop has always mixed well with other genres; witness the collaboration between rappers Run-DMC and rock kings Aerosmith in the chart-topping remix of ‘Walk This Way.”

6 Liner Notes

Njpac org /education 7
the song, “Walk This Way” — which Aerosmith initially released in 1975, and Run-DMC rerecorded, to wild acclaim, with both groups in 1986. But Lil Nas X’s hit outstriped even the success of “Walk This Way,” deftly mixing country and rap. The tune became an even bigger sensation when he enlisted the help of country star Bill Ray Cyrus to sing a few lines in the song. “Old Town Road” spent weeks as the number one single atop the Billboard charts, eventually becoming the longest-running No. 1 single in Billboard’s history when it topped the charts for 17 weeks straight. A new remix of the song included the double take combination of the rap star Young Thug and Mason Ramsey — known as the Yodeling Kid. Lil Nas X also marked another milestone in music history when he came out as gay in 2019.

“His success proves the gatekeepers comically incapable of reining him in as he hops genres, busts formats and breaks all the old-school taboos,” read an NPR article.

Groups and artists mentioned in interview with Paige Hernandez

Arthur “Art” Blakey
Legendary jazz drummer and bandleader who was a prominent figure in jazz throughout much of the 20th century; known for a distinctive, polyrhythmic style.

Digable Planets
Hip hop, jazz-infused trio that broke out big in the 1990s; famous for its sampling of jazz, such as Art Blakey, in its songs.

The Roots
Widely-acclaimed hip-hop band known for a jazz/funk style; currently the house band for the late night talk show, The Tonight Show starring Jimmy Fallon.

Pharrell Williams
Popular producer, rapper, singer and songwriter who’s worked with such artists as Britney Spears and Backstreet Boys, in addition to releasing his own music.

Kendrick Lamar
Regarded as one of the best hip-hop artists of his generation, his songs blend elements of funk, jazz and spoken word, First rapper to be awarded a Pulitzer Prize for Music in 2018 for his album Damn. Before Lamar, the honor was usually presented to classical or jazz albums.

Common
Prominent rapper and actor who has crafted songs that eschew violence and the overt machismo of mainstream hip hop.

A Tribe Called Quest
Groundbreaking hip-hop group that became famous in the 1990s; known for heavily jazz-influenced songs, Afrocentric style and socially-aware lyrics. The group’s artistry would go on to influence artists like Kanye West and OutKast.

Cardi B
Rapper, singer and television personality who first became famous for her clever posts on social media platforms Instagram and Vine; her rap style has been described as energetic, raw and nimble.

Nicki Minaj
Wildly successful rapper and pop singer who’s achieved huge crossover appeal; known for complicated wordplay, slick flow, use of alter egos and different accents. Her fans are known as The Barbz.

Drake
Canadian rapper who was first known for his acting on the TV show Degrassi: The Next Generation. His songs and albums have been consistently successful. His music style combines singing and rapping and his lyrics are often emotional.

Rihanna
Popular singer, actress and businesswoman from Barbados. Her songs have incorporated R&B, reggae, hip hop and electronic dance music. She is also known for her cosmetic line, Fenty, which became successful due to its wide array of skin tones and on-trend colors.

Lil Kim
Pioneering female rap artist who has a distinctive throaty, tough-girl delivery. Her lyrics are sexually-explicit and sex-positive, with a hardcore slant. She is seen as an influence on contemporary female rappers like Cardi B and Nicki Minaj.
Liner Notes
on a CD surface and play back a sound recording. Lasers in CD audio players read the music from peer to peer “mixtapes.” People used to create a personalized list of music on cassette tapes for themselves or for other people.

Vinyl Discs
Also called vinyl records. An analog form of music storage. Sound is stored in the form of grooves cut into flat discs made of a plastic called vinyl. Grooved patterns on the disc surface directly correlate to sound waves. Vinyls are played on turntable machines.

Cassette Tapes
An analog form of music storage. Sound is stored in the form of magnetic tape spooled in a rectangular-shaped, plastic cassette. Used for recording music and playing back music. People used to create a personalized list of music on cassette tapes for themselves or for other people. This was called a “mixtape.” Up and coming rap stars would distribute their music in this format to fans and record executives. Although cassette tapes no longer widely used, people still call new music that’s distributed from peer to peer “mixtapes.”

CD
A compact disc or CD is a digital form of storage in which music is encoded on a reflective, round plastic surface. Lasers in CD audio players read the music on a CD surface and play back a sound recording.

Gen Z
Young people born from approximately 1995 to 2010, whom social scientists consider true digital natives. They have only known a world full of smart phones, fast internet and hyper-connected online social networks. Other generations, according to McKinsey & Co., are Baby Boomers (born from 1940 to 1959), Gen Xers (born from 1960 to 1979), and Millennials (born from 1980 and 1994).

Break Dancing
A form of stylized street dancing that is acrobatic, energetic and athletic. It is performed along to hip-hop songs. Break dancing is a vital part of hip-hop culture and evolved with it from its earliest days. Males who break dance are called b-boys, while females are b-girls. The International Olympic Committee organizers are considering including break dance in the next Summer Olympics.

Graffiti
Writings or visual imagery on surfaces, usually done without permission. People have been doing graffiti since ancient history, but it reached an artistic high water mark with the advent of hip hop. Contemporary graffiti, which can be highly stylized and colorful and requires a remarkable amount of skill, is considered an integral part of hip-hop culture.

Emcee or MC
Short for “master of ceremonies.” The person who leads or hosts an event. In the early days of hip hop, MCs would warm up the crowd and introduce the deejay. They would chant to the music and the chants would become rhyming sentences, giving birth to a form of proto-rap. MC eventually became another word for rapper.

Sampling
A musical technique in which an artist or producer takes a portion of an existing recording of another song, such as a beat or melody, and inserts it into a new song.

Spoken Word
Poetry performed by people on stage. Spoken word is closely associated with hip hop and uses similar rhythms, cadence, flow and word play.
In-School Residencies: Drama + Social Studies. Dance + Math. It all adds up in NJPAC's In-School Residencies in which professional teaching artists partner with educators to bring the arts into the classroom. Each 7- to 10-week program culminates in a student performance or an interactive family workshop. All programs address state and national standards. NJPAC is the regional provider in New Jersey for international arts programs like the NJ Wolf Trap Program and Dancing Classrooms Global.

Assemblies: NJPAC presents engaging school assembly programs that are presented by professional artists that invite students into the enchanting world of live performance. NJPAC's assembly series promotes cultural awareness and invigorates learning by presenting works that are connected to your school's curriculum.

Professional Development: NJPAC Professional Development engages classroom teachers, arts specialists and teaching artists as integrated teams that combine arts pedagogy, content, classroom management and social behavioral strategies to ignite and inspire arts-rich classrooms. Working as a team empowers teachers to share practice and strategy. Our goal is to inspire artistic and intellectual capacities in students, building competence and confidence in both students and teachers.

Saturday Programs: NJPAC's Saturday programs are geared towards students at every level—from those who dream of starring on Broadway to those who are still learning their scales. Students work with professional artists to build technique and develop their own creative style in film, contemporary modern dance, hip hop, jazz, musical theater and symphonic band.

Summer Programs: Want to begin to explore the arts? Or immerse yourself in the study of one genre? Then join us at NJPAC next summer in one of seven programs that spark the creativity in every child through the study of music, dance and theater.

For more information or to schedule an appointment, please call our education sales team at 973.353.7058 or email artseducation@njpac.org. Visit njpac.org/education