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soul science lab

make a joyful noize

teacher resource guide

about the performance

Soul Science Lab's *Make a Joyful Noize* performance is an immersive musical experience that shows the audience the joy that can result from struggle. A celebration of Black culture, the performance spans the journey of Black Americans through Black music. The foundation of *Make a Joyful Noize* comes from the image of a butterfly as it transforms: from spirit to pain to resistance to love and finally, to transformation. Audience members are invited to view life not as a struggle but rather a journey to joy!

Soul Science Lab co-founders Chen Lo and Asante Amin share a wealth of talent as musicians, composers, educators and producers. Based in Brooklyn, the duo strives to create a dynamic multimedia storytelling encounter using sounds and visuals. In collaboration with a live band, vocalists, film and movement, the duo have created an audience experience in *Make a Joyful Noize* that is truly unforgettable.

As educators, Chen Lo and Asante have developed an entire curriculum based on their *Make a Joyful Noize* program called Soul Science University. The curriculum delves into song writing and music production with a foundation of music history and cultural considerations.



cultural connections

Make a Joyful Noize acknowledges the rich history of Black music through the vessel of hip hop. Countless musicians have credited Black music as the backbone of all types of American music. Spirituals, blues, jazz, gospel, R&B and more created the foundation of hip hop alongside historical periods and events of Black struggle — Reconstruction, Jim Crow, the Great Migration, the Harlem Renaissance and the Civil Rights Movement, to name a few. All of these combined factors birthed hip hop, the medium through which Soul Science Lab tells the uplifting story of Black joy.

Hip hop began in August 1973 in the Bronx at a party when DJ Kool Herc developed the technique of looping a break, or percussive interludes on funk and soul records. Herc's approach appealed to dancers in particular, resulting in the emergence of breakdancing, a style of dance that incorporates acrobatic, complex and energetic moves. Then, Herc and a friend began adding rhythmic phrases on top of the music, resulting in what we know as rap and those leading it as emcees. Graffiti artists creating bold, bright, bubble and block lettering, became integral to hip hop's album covers, clothing and surroundings, and have been intertwined ever since. All of these cultural elements are underscored by a spirit of celebration, understanding and commentary.

Modern hip hop continues to offer a window to the Black experience in America. This was evident in Kendrick Lamar's 2025 Super Bowl halftime show which began with famed black actor Samuel L. Jackson dressed as Uncle Sam, warning Lamar not to do anything "too loud, too reckless, too ghetto." The show represented a game, as indicated by the presence of a giant PlayStation controller. During the song "Humble," Lamar highlighted the disparities between majority and minority groups. Disguised as a patriotic salute with dancers in red, white and blue attire, the performance of the song instead contrasted the slavery of America's past and anti-DEI attitudes of its present. Throughout each level of the performance's "game," Jackson cautions Lamar not to upset the expectation of not only a "typical" Super Bowl halftime show but of the role of a Black man in America. The show concludes with the phrase "game over" spelled out in the crowd and declared by Lamar, signaling his victory over society's rules and expectations. Thus, hip hop remains an impactful artistic means of communicating the reality of Black struggle and subsequent triumph.

vocabulary

Afrobeat

A music genre that fuses African music with Black American influences to produce a compelling hybrid of culture and sound

B-boys/B-girls

Individuals who participate in hip hop culture, specifically in break dancing

Break

A section of a song where most instrumental elements, except for the percussion, are removed, leaving the drum beat or rhythm

Breakdancing

An energetic style of dance typically performed to hip hop music, characterized by stylized footwork and acrobatic or athletic movements

Call and Response

A musical phrase in which the first and often solo part is answered by a second and often ensemble part

Culture

The customs, arts, social institutions and achievements of a particular nation, people or other social group

Emcee

The vocalist who raps, often emphasizing lyrical skill, storytelling, wordplay and crowd interaction over commercial appeal

Graffiti

Writing or drawings scribbled, scratched or sprayed on a wall or other surface in a public place

Hip Hop

A cultural movement that attained widespread popularity in the 1980s and 1990s; the backing music for rap

Improvisation

A piece of music, drama, etc., created without preparation

Loop

A small repeating section of a song that a DJ sets to play continuously

Rap

A type of popular music originating among African American communities in which words are recited rapidly and rhythmically over prerecorded electronic instrumental backing



Sacred

Of or relating to religion

Secular

Attitudes, activities or other things that have no religious or spiritual basis

Soul Music

An African America popular music genre developed in the late 1950s that merges gospel, rhythm and blues, characterized by passionate, emotionally expressive vocals and dynamic instrumentation

Syncopation

The practice of displacing the beats or accents in music or a rhythm so that strong beats become weak and vice versa

inspired learning for the classroom

	Teacher Focus	Student Activity	NJ Student Learning Standards
P	<p>Prepare</p> <p>Begin the lesson by checking in with your students. Some students (and teachers) come to school with the baggage of everything happening in their lives, so it's important to spend two or three minutes in silence, allowing yourself to breathe deeply, consider how you feel today and regulate your mind and body. Once the time is up, let students share a one-word answer to a prompt about how they feel (e.g., If you were a texture, what texture would you be? If you could swap lives with a character, who would it be? What food would you be today?).</p> <p>Introduce your students to their field trip by discovering what they already know about this art form, topic or type of performance. Then explain more fully what they will see at the theater and why it's important. This can be accomplished by sharing images, vocabulary, videos or context that might help them appreciate the performance more fully.</p>	<p>Who are your favorite hip hop and rap artists? What are your favorite hip hop and rap songs? Share your answers with your classmates.</p> <p>Hip hop is the current style of mainstream Black popular music in America but many other styles preceded it. You will learn about these styles during the performance of Soul Science Lab's <i>Make a Joyful Noize</i>.</p> <p>Soul Science Lab is a storytelling duo who utilize hip hop to tell the story of Black joy through Black music. Their logo is a butterfly; take a look at it here. Participate in a class discussion about the journey of a butterfly. Watch the Creating Make a Joyful Noize Trailer and consider how Soul Science Lab uses a butterfly as a metaphor for Black joy.</p>	<p>Visual and Performing Arts Anchor Standard 7, 10</p> <p>Social and Emotional Learning Self-Awareness, Social Awareness</p>
E	<p>Experience</p> <p>For some students, this may be their first time in a theater. Review audience etiquette and go over expectations for arrival and departure from the theater. Before watching the show, provide a discussion question for them to consider during the performance.</p>	<p>Be sure to do your part as a responsible audience member! Consider the audience etiquette your teacher reviewed and how you would want an audience to act if you were a performer.</p> <p>Also consider the following questions during the show:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What styles of music besides hip hop and rap do you recognize during the performance? 2. What artistic means are utilized to convey a message (i.e., poetry, music, dance, multimedia, etc.)? 3. In what ways does the story in <i>Make a Joyful Noize</i> parallel the transformation of a butterfly? 	<p>Visual and Performing Arts Anchor Standard 7, 8, 11</p> <p>Social and Emotional Learning Self-Management, Social Awareness</p>
R	<p>Reflect</p> <p>As a class, discuss the prompts from the previous section. Then have students reflect on the skill set of the performers they saw in the show. Go around the class and have each student fill in the following statement: I can already _____ like the performers did, but I can't _____ yet. Their response can be about the performers themselves, the characters they represented, or another element they appreciated from the trip. After everyone is done, remind them that with enough time and practice, they can accomplish anything they set their minds to. After reflecting together, give students the chance to reflect privately by free-form writing or responding to a prompt.</p>	<p>What is your overall reaction to the performance? Make your voice heard in class discussion in response to the questions you were asked to consider during the performance. Did you notice that Chen Lo and Asante perform as both storytellers and hip hop emcees?</p> <p>If you could be a storyteller and/or hip hop emcee, what story would you tell about your life, family, culture, etc.? What style of music would you use to tell your story? Write down your response(s) as prompted by your teacher.</p>	<p>Visual and Performing Arts Anchor Standard 10, 11</p> <p>Social and Emotional Learning Self-Awareness, Social Awareness</p> <p>English Language Arts W.AW.8.1.</p>
F	<p>Focus</p> <p>Have students do research and activity sheets that focus on one of the following elements:</p> <p>The Artist: How did the life experience of the artist influence their work?</p> <p>The Form: What is the history and significance of this specific style of art?</p> <p>The History: What is there to learn about the time period, culture, social movement or place this performance references? Before they begin, have students list two or three things they hope to learn during their research.</p>	<p>Define the term culture and review what cultural elements Soul Science Lab referenced during <i>Make a Joyful Noize</i>. As a class, watch the video clip from Soul Science Lab's <i>Make a Joyful Noize</i> curriculum entitled "What is Culture?" Review the cultural elements mentioned by Chen Lo and Asante in the video clip and add any additional ones you know of.</p> <p>Next, watch the video clip from Soul Science Lab's <i>Make a Joyful Noize</i> curriculum entitled "Culture Brainstorm." Then, complete Activity Sheet 1 to brainstorm elements of your own personal culture. If you need a reminder, review the cultural elements included on the sheet.</p> <p><i>Make a Joyful Noize</i> is grounded in Black culture and uses black music to celebrate it. The performance traveled through various styles of Black popular music. You will examine these styles further using Activity Sheet 2. All of the examined styles have had an influence on the Black music that is popular today, particularly rap and hip hop.</p>	<p>Visual and Performing Arts Anchor Standard 11</p> <p>Social and Emotional Learning Social Awareness</p> <p>English Language Arts RI.CR.8.1</p> <p>Social Studies 6.1.12.HistorySE.14.a</p>
O	<p>Originate</p> <p>The Artist: Have students reflect on their own life and what art could be inspired from their experience. Have them decide which art form they will use to tell their life story, and begin the brainstorming process.</p> <p>The Form: Have students create a work of art using the same form they saw in the performance about any topic of their choice.</p> <p>The History: Have students choose a social movement that is important to them and create a work of art in any form they choose to express their opinion on that movement.</p>		<p>Visual and Performing Arts Anchor Standard 1, 2, 10, 11</p> <p>Social and Emotional Learning Self-Awareness, Social Awareness</p>
R	<p>Rehearse</p> <p>Give students time to continue developing their creation. If time allows, let them develop their projects on their own, then break the class out into small groups to discuss their ideas and receive additional ideas from peers.</p> <p>As they are working, use this time to walk around and ask them each about their project, the materials they are using, and what inspired them.</p>		<p>Visual and Performing Arts Anchor Standard 2, 5, 7</p> <p>Social and Emotional Learning Self-Awareness, Self-Management, Social Awareness, Relationship Skills</p>
M	<p>Mix it all together!</p> <p>Once everyone is done, come to an agreement as a class on how it would be best to share what everyone's been working on.</p> <p>Allow each student to present their work, discussing their research and what inspired them. Remind students to be respectful of one another. Between presentations, allow two or three students to describe their reactions to the work that was presented. Encourage them to use phrases like "It reminded me of _____" or "It made me feel _____" rather than describing the project as good or bad.</p>		<p>Visual and Performing Arts Anchor Standard 5, 6, 7, 8</p> <p>Social and Emotional Learning Social Awareness, Relationship Skills, Responsible Decision-Making</p>

curriculum standards

English Language Arts

W.AW.8.1.

Write arguments on discipline-specific content (e.g., social studies, science, technical subjects, English/Language Arts) to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

RI.CR.8.1.

Cite a range of textual evidence and make clear and relevant connections (including informational text features such as charts, graphs, and diagrams) that strongly support an analysis of multiple aspects of what an informational text says explicitly, as well as inferences drawn from the text.

Social Emotional Learning

Responsible decision making

Recognizing how critical thinking skills are useful both inside and outside of school; Identifying solutions for personal and social problems; Learning how to make a reasoned judgment after analyzing information, data, and facts; Demonstrating curiosity and open-mindedness

Relationship skills

Communicating effectively; Practicing teamwork and collaborative problem-solving

Self-awareness

Integrating personal & social identities; Identifying ones' emotions; Linking feelings, values and thoughts

Social-awareness

Taking others' perspectives; Showing concern for the feelings of others; demonstrating empathy and compassion

Social Studies

6.1.12.HistorySE.14.a

Explore the various ways women, racial and ethnic minorities, the LGBTQ community, and individuals with disabilities have contributed to the American economy, politics and society.

Visual & Performing Arts

Anchor Standard 1

Conceptualizing and generating ideas

Anchor Standard 2

Organizing and developing ideas

Anchor Standard 5

Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation

Anchor Standard 7

Perceiving and analyzing products

Anchor Standard 8

Applying criteria to evaluate products

Anchor Standard 9

Interpret intent and meaning

Anchor Standard 10

Synthesizing and relating knowledge and personal experiences to create products.

Anchor Standard 11

Relating artistic ideas and works within societal, cultural, and historical contexts to deepen understanding.

additional resources

NJPAC

About NJPAC

njpac.org/about

NJPAC's Arts Education programs

njpac.org/arts-education

NJPAC's David G. Berger Master Class Series

njpac.org/berger

Soul Science Lab: *Make a Joyful Noize* Activity Sheets

njpac.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/SoulScienceLab_ActivitySheets.pdf

Websites

Soul Science Lab

soulsciencelab.com

Timeline of African American Music

timeline.carnegiehall.org

"About The National Museum of African American Music"

woodandsteel.taylorguitars.com/issue/2021-issue-2/feature-story/deep-roots-the-national-museum-of-african-american-music

"The Roots Theater"

nmaam.org/exhibit/roots-theater

"50 Years Ago, Teenagers Partied in the Bronx — and Gave Rise to Hip Hop"

npr.org/2023/07/11/1186407223/50-years-ago-teenagers-partied-in-the-bronx-and-gave-rise-to-hip-hop

"History of Breakdancing: Key Events & Evolution"

redbull.com/us-en/history-of-breakdancing

"Hip Hop: A Culture of Vision and Voice"

kennedy-center.org/education/resources-for-educators/classroom-resources/media-and-interactives/media/hip-hop/hip-hop-a-culture-of-vision-and-voice

"From Juke Joints to Arenas: The Evolution of Black Music"

bet.com/article/25kxzf/28-days-of-black-history-from-juke-joints-to-arenas-the-evolution-of-black-music

"Black Music History Playlists" | Africana Studies

africana.sas.upenn.edu/center-africana-studies/black-music-history-playlists

Videos

The Birth of Hip Hop

youtube.com/watch?v=10C-Q3NIlzU

What is 'Make a Joyful Noize?'

youtube.com/watch?v=R5xHalOliq4

What is Culture?

youtube.com/watch?v=l43C-BmbmWA

Culture Brainstorm

youtube.com/watch?v=BuBY6DQNGo0

Is Blues the Mother of All Modern Music?

youtube.com/watch?v=HYy-6liraVQ

KRS-One and the Four Core Elements of Hip Hop

youtube.com/watch?v=BQ-A0sOXxeM

The Origin of Hip Hop

youtube.com/watch?v=ub8t6DzjoiQ

DJ Kool Herc's Turntables: Hip Hop Extraordinaire

youtube.com/watch?v=oWfQMlP8NM

Creating Make a Joyful Noize Trailer

youtube.com/watch?v=RKE_QEkBWUw

Podcast

Paradigms Podcast:

Soul Science Lab's Chen Lo and Asante Aminer

paradigms.life/2017/soul-science-lab-chen-lo-asante-aminer-musicians-composers-educators-cultural-creatives/

bring the arts to your school

In-School Residencies

NJPAC teaching artists come right to your school to teach the performing arts to your students. Our super-flexible in-person residencies are designed to meet your needs and you'll have a dedicated program manager to help you every step of the way. It's the perfect program to keep your students creating, connecting and expressing themselves through the magic of the arts.

Professional Development

Calling all educators! Expand your teaching skills, deepen your curriculum and give yourself a creative boost in NJPAC's forward-thinking professional development workshops. Our virtual PD programs are for teachers all the way from pre-K to high school and include hip hop, dance, storytelling, theater, music and more. Not only will you learn something... you'll also have fun and be inspired.

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arts training for students

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 hip hop, jazz, theater, 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 our immersive programs that spark the creativity in every child through the study of music, dance and theater.

contact us!

For more information or to schedule an appointment, please email our team at artseducation@njpac.org. Or visit njpac.org/education

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+ deceased