

**String Instruments through the Ages**  
Assembly and Classroom performance  
Tina Chancey, History Detective

**PERFORMER:** Dr. Tina Chancey  
3706 North 17<sup>th</sup> Street  
Arlington, VA 22207  
(703) 407-0642  
[tinachancey@cs.com](mailto:tinachancey@cs.com) / [www.tinachancey.net](http://www.tinachancey.net)

### **Program Objectives**

- To bring the musical past alive using real people, events and music
- To show how music was used in daily life in the middle ages, Renaissance, Colonial period and today
- To provide a cultural context for the development of the violin family
- To develop the audience's eyes for detail, powers of observation and comparison
- To demonstrate that so-called "classical" music isn't necessarily elitist or stuffy

### **Connections to DCPS standards**

Students explore a variety of heritages from music of many cultures.

### **From New Elementary Report Card**

Students in grades 3-5 will be graded on the following: identifies music of various composers, cultures, styles and forms.

### **Rationale**

This program accommodates diverse student populations with little English as well as students with a variety of disabilities by taking advantage of universal communication tools: music and rhythm, mime and physical comedy, walking into the audience and making personal contact. The English vocabulary of the program is consciously kept very simple; more challenging words are discussed as they are used, and associated with familiar ones. Actions and words are always coordinated, movement is prepared with a verbal transition. Stories are acted out as well as told. As much as possible, I have tried to reinforce the program on both sonic and visual levels.

### **Program Summary**

As a History Detective, Tina Chancey looks to the past to find out where the violin came from. She's trying to find the closest relative from the past, the closest *ancestor*, of the violin, armed with three clues: it should be made of wood, have strings, and be played with a bow.

First she finds the **VIELLE**, an instrument from the middle ages, and introduces a *jongleur* named Marie de Ventadorn who tells a true story about how the vielle saved Richard the Lionheart.

Next she comes upon the **REBEC** a Renaissance instrument something like a turkey leg, held in the armpit. Guillaume de Machaut sings a song about courtly love translated into colloquial English.

The third instrument she discovers is the **GAMBA**, her favorite instrument because it plays high and low, melodies and chords, and even accompanies songs like a piano although it's much more portable.

Last, as colonial American music master John Stadler, she muses on the violin, which Thomas Jefferson called a **FIDDLE**, and demonstrates Jefferson's favorite tune, which she played for President Obama just last week.

Finally, the students become her "quiz show audience" and vote on which instrument is the closest ancestor of the violin.

### **Suggested Pre-Performance Activities**

- Look at and listen to individual members of the violin family, in person or on recording
- Distinguish between the middle ages and the Renaissance (they both had castles and kings but how were they different?)
- Teach the songs Yankee Doodle, My Country 'tis of Thee
- Discuss Thomas Jefferson, as a man of many interests: inventor, architect, gardener, musician
- Talk about the different ways that musical instruments make sounds: Plunk, Whistle, Toot, Boom
- Listen to Peter and the Wolf to learn about the other orchestral instruments
- Make everyone in the class a History Detective; send them all on a quest to solve an Unsolved Mystery.

### **Related Vocabulary/Terminology**

- INSTRUMENT NAMES: Vielle (V-L), Rebec, Gamba, Fiddle
- Indiscreet
- Portable
- Jongleur (juggler)
- Ancestors
- Courtly Love
- Dungeon
- Knight

### **Resource Materials**

"Make your own mouth bow, limber jack, musical washboard, washtub bass," by Bruce Hutton

"Neo Medieval," "Luminous Spirit," "Early American Roots," recordings by HESPERUS

"The World Turned Upside Down: Music of Colonial America," Mel Bay Publications, Inc.

"The American History Songbook," Mel Bay Publications, Inc.

"Playing with Fire," "Medieval Tapestry," recordings by the Folger Consort

### **Listening and Viewing During the Performance** **Connections to Other Curricular Areas**

**History and Social Studies:** Every curriculum includes units on the middle ages or Renaissance, as well as the Pilgrims and the American Revolution. The four instruments I discuss are located in these four time periods and that connection can be expanded upon. Further work can also be done on the Crusades (the vielle and rebec were brought from Arab lands, as well as the bow).

**Science:** This program lends itself to a further consideration of acoustics, the sound-conducting properties of different materials, and the physiological function of the ear. Students can make and play different kinds of musical instruments: drums, mouth bows, whistles, pan pipes. They can study the violin family to learn how longer and fatter strings make lower sounds.

**Art:** Students can draw pictures illustrating parts of the program: Richard the Lionheart in prison saved by a vielle player; a knight writing poetry; costumed musicians playing for President Clinton.

**Music:** Students can learn a Renaissance dance and play some of the tunes from the program on their recorders. They can continue to study different instruments of the orchestra by listening to "Peter and the Wolf" or they can focus upon the individual members of the violin family, in person or on recording. They can launch their own quest for Western European ancestors of the violin such as the **Baryton, Viola d'Amore, Lyra da Braccio**, or they can look into non-Western relatives of the violin to find a Yugoslavian or Indonesian **Lyra**, Greek or Turkish **kamenj**, Chinese **Airhu**, Indian **Sarod**.

**English:** Students can write their own courtly love poem to set to music. They can create further Unsolved Mysteries of their own, set in Victorian England, ancient Egypt, or pre-Columbian Mexico.

### **Students should notice/think about**

- How all the instruments are a little bit different, even though they look the same at first glance. How is the difference between these string instruments like the difference between a bicycle and a motorcycle?
- How does Tina Chancey become different characters without using different costumes and make-up?
- Is it harder to detect things in the past than in the present?
- Why do you think it doesn't work to play a big instrument with a little bow, and vice versa? Have you ever worn somebody's big shoes and tried to walk around? What happens?

### **Post-Performance Activities**

- Continue the quest for Western European ancestors of the violin to find the **Baryton, Viola d'Amore, Lyra da Braccio**
- Continue the quest for non-Western relatives of the violin to find the Yugoslavian or Indonesian **Lyra**, Greek and Turkish **kamenj**, Chinese **Airhu**, Indian **Sarod**
- Create a Colonial Entertainment from the time of Thomas Jefferson with dancing, singing, recitations, and games
- Learn more about acoustics by making musical instruments out of kitchen gadgets; by studying such phenomenon as rubber bands vibrating at different thicknesses and tensions,

glasses of water with different amounts in each glass to make different pitches, a washtub bass, an African tune bow

- Use plastic water bottles as percussion instruments and make a rhythm band

### **Performer's Background**

Tina Chancey is a performer, educator and scholar. A former chair of the Early Music America Education Committee, Dr. Chancey has been a presenter at Orff-Schulwerk, ASTA, MENC, and Chamber Music America national conferences. Since 1985, she has given workshops and assemblies in the DC public schools through the Washington Performing Arts Society's "Concerts in Schools" program and Young Audiences Maryland. A participant in the Kennedy Center Education Department's seminar, **Artists as Educators: Creating Teachers' Workshops**, Dr. Chancey recently presented a day-long teachers' workshop integrating music, literature and art on Fame and Folly with Rebecca Arkenberg at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. She was selected to represent the Smithsonian Institution in a week-long educational residency in Long Beach, CA. She has also presented seminars for the Smithsonian Associates program.

A founding member and co-director of HESPERUS, an early/traditional music ensemble that tours nationally and internationally, she is also a former member of the Folger Consort and the Ensemble for Early Music. A multi-instrumentalist, she plays early and traditional bowed strings and has received grants from the National Endowment for the Arts to support debut performances on the French baroque pardessus de viole at the Kennedy Center and Weil Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall. Dr. Chancey attended Oberlin College, received Masters degrees from Queens College and New York University, and a PhD from the Union Institute. Her articles on early and traditional music appear in scholarly and popular publications, and she has recorded for a score of labels from Arabesque to Windham Hill. She also produces recordings for others and runs the SoundCatcher: Play by Ear workshop. Dr. Chancey has received a lifetime achievement award from Early Music America. She was a visiting professor at Oberlin Conservatory, teaching improvisation for the month of January, 2013.