

EDUCATOR GUIDE

Artist/Organization: Howard Wiley
Discipline(s): Music

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Howard Wiley performs at Intersection for the Arts.
Still image from the SPARK story, 2007.

SECTION I - OVERVIEW

SUBJECT

Howard Wiley and the Angola Project

GRADE RANGES

K-12

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Performing Arts, Language Arts

OBJECTIVE

To introduce students to the music of Howard Wiley and Southern folk traditions. To provide a forum for students to understand the history of the Angola State Penitentiary.

STORY SYNOPSIS

Bay Area jazz saxophonist Howard Wiley put together a program based on music found at Louisiana's notorious Angola State Penitentiary, where songs dating back to the times of slavery have been preserved. Spark checks in with Wiley and his ensemble rehearse for a concert at San Francisco's Intersection for the Arts.

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

- Hands-on group projects, in which students assist and support one another
- Hands-on individual projects, in which students work independently
- Group oral discussion and analysis, including peer review and aesthetic valuing
- Teacher-guided instruction, including demonstration and guidance

INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES

- To introduce students to the history of jazz music and its traditions
- To foster an understanding of Angola State Penitentiary and those who have been incarcerated
- To analyze how musical traditions change and develop

EQUIPMENT NEEDED

SPARK story on Howard Wiley on DVD or VHS and related equipment or computer with Internet access, navigation software, RealPlayer software speakers and a sound card.

CD player and musical samples selected from the Resource section of the guide

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Access to libraries with up-to-date collections of periodicals, books, CDs and research papers
- Access to jazz recordings and CD player
- Pencils, pens, and paper
- Optional: Musical instruments (homemade or traditional)

INTELLIGENCES ADDRESSED

- Logical-Mathematical – the ability to detect patterns, reason deductively and think logically
- Musical Intelligence – the capability to recognize and compose musical pitches, tones, and rhythms
- Interpersonal – awareness of others' feelings, emotions, goals, motivations
- Intrapersonal – awareness of one's own feelings, emotions, goals, motivations



See more information on [Multiple Intelligences](http://www.kqed.org/spark/education) at www.kqed.org/spark/education.

MEDIA MATTERS

The following SPARK stories and educator guides may be used for compare/contrast purposes:

The Crooked Jades – Old Time band

<http://www.kqed.org/arts/places/spark/profile.jsp?id=9862>

John Santos – Latin Jazz musician

<http://www.kqed.org/arts/people/spark/profile.jsp?id=15061>

SECTION II – CONTENT/CONTEXT

CONTENT OVERVIEW

Bay Area jazz saxophonist Howard Wiley has discovered that great works of art sometimes are born of the direst circumstances. Wiley has put together a program based on music found at Louisiana's notorious Angola State Penitentiary, where gospel songs dating back to the 1930s have been preserved. Spark checks in as Wiley and his ensemble rehearse for a concert at San Francisco's Intersection for the Arts.

Angola State Penitentiary is one of the largest prisons in the country, holding about 5,000 prisoners and maintaining a staff of 1,000. The facility sits on an 18,000-acre expanse that was originally four separate slave plantations. In 1880, Samuel Lawrence James joined these plantations to form the Angola plantation and contracted convicts from the state to work on it. Louisiana took full control of the plantation in 1901.

Over the course of the 20th century, Angola developed a reputation for violence and abuse. Still a working farm, the prison became known as a holdover from the days of slavery, where the predominantly black inmates were forced to spend life sentences laboring under dehumanizing conditions. In 1952, 31 inmates, who came to be known as the Heel String Gang, severed their own Achilles tendons in protest of the brutal work routine. In 1972, the federal courts finally interceded and ordered a crackdown on the abuse at Angola.

Daniel Atkinson, an ethnomusicologist who studies African American folk traditions of the South, introduced Wiley to the music of Angola. In part because Angola remained a functioning plantation, inmates retained and handed down

some of the spirituals and work songs of the slave era, traditions that became mingled with secular performance practices when populations began migrating north and west in the 1920s. This legacy, which Wiley is featuring in his Angola program, was crucial to the development of American music, eventually giving rise to a number of genres, including blues, gospel and jazz.

For Wiley, uncovering the music of Angola State Penitentiary has opened a window onto the musical origins of the South. He has put together the Angola Project, which he describes as a "soul chamber ensemble." The ensemble combines two vocalists with violins, bass, saxophone, trombone, trumpet and drums. His interpretations of the songs from Angola are based on the call-and-response interplay between leader and congregation in churches. The style adds a stirring, haunting tone to the compositions.

Howard Wiley was born in Berkeley, California, where he began performing in church at a very young age. He released his first CD as a bandleader at the age of 15. Wiley has also recorded and performed with such jazz and blues notables as Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown, Dayna Sean Stephens, Lavay Smith and Norman Brown. He has received many accolades from the Thelonious Monk Institute and numerous awards, including MVP honors for the Grammy All-American Jazz Band and the Berklee College of Music Scholarship Award.

THE BIG PICTURE

Howard Wiley's Angola Project is an investigation into the musical heritage of the South, a culturally fertile region that gave rise to most forms of American roots music, including blues, gospel, and jazz.

Some of the earliest recordings of the folk traditions of the South were made by Alan Lomax, a folklorist and musicologist who began documenting American roots music in the 1930s. Lomax was able to capture these songs thanks to the innovation of portable recording equipment, which could be taken on the road and set up at a remote location. Lomax traveled to the Mississippi Delta, Louisiana, Texas, and other regions in the South to discover the region's songs, musical instrumentation, and indigenous styles, often finding his subjects in state prisons.

Lomax, along with his father John Lomax, worked on the Archive of Folk Culture at the Library of Congress. Together they recorded over ten thousand recordings for the archive, which became the basis for most of our current understanding of rural American musical traditions. Several of the artists that Lomax recorded have since become amongst the most influential figures of American music, including Huddie "Leadbelly" Ledbetter, McKinley "Muddy Waters" Morganfield, Woody Guthrie, and New Orleans jazz pioneer Ferdinand "Jelly Roll" Morton.

While folklorists like Lomax often traveled to prisons in search of American folk music, some musicians have used the jazz, blues, and gospel influences to decry the systemic repression that accounts for African-Americans' over representation in the prison system. In 1972, in response to the riots at the Attica Correctional Facility in New York State of the previous year, jazz musician Archie Shepp released *Attica Blues*, a record that openly addressed issues of racial bias and brutalization of the prisoners that surrounded the event. The record was also a

musical stretch for Shepp, who was beginning to incorporate elements of blues, gospel and other forms of African and African-American roots music into a style that came to characterize much of the forward thinking jazz of the decade to follow.

RESOURCES – TEXTS

Butler, Anne. *Dying to Tell: Angola, Crime Consequence, Conclusion at Louisiana State Penitentiary*. University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1992.

Charters, Samuel B. *The Country Blues*. Da Capo, 2001.

Harris, Michael W. *The Rise of Gospel Blues: The Music of Thomas Andrew Dorsey in the Urban Church*. Oxford University Press, 1994.

Moore, Allan, ed. *The Cambridge Companion of Blues and Gospel Music*. Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Palmer, Robert. *Deep Blues: A Musical and Cultural History of the Mississippi Delta*. Penguin, 1982.

Prejean, Helen. *Dead Man Walking*. Vintage, 1994.

Shere, Denis. *Cain's Redemption*. Northfield publishing, 2005.

RESOURCES – WEB SITES

Howard Wiley's website:
<http://www.howardwiley.com/>

A review of the Angola Project from j-notes.com:
http://www.j-notes.com/archives/2007/02/23/howard_wiley_the_angola_projec_1.php

Wikipedia article on Angola State Penitentiary:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louisiana_State_Penitentiary

Wikipedia article on Alan Lomax:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alan_lomax

Archive of Folk Culture website:

<http://www.loc.gov/folklife/archive.html>

Wikipedia article on the Attica prison riots:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Attica_Prison_riots

Allmusic.com entry on Archie Shepp's *Attica*

Blues:

<http://allmusic.com/cg/amg.dll?p=amg&sql=10:kxfexqygld0e>

VIDEO/AUDIO RESOURCES

American Primitive, Vol. 1. Various Artists. Revenant records, 1997.

Shepp, Archie. *Attica Blues*. Impulse records, 1972.

The Farm: Angola, USA, video recording, 1998.

Wiley, Howard. *The Angola Project*. 2007.

Wiley, Howard. *Twenty First Century Negro*. 2002.

BAY AREA FIELD TRIPS

Intersection for the Arts

446 Valencia Street

San Francisco, CA 94103

415-626-2787

www.theintersection.org

SECTION III – VOCABULARY

DISCIPLINE-BASED VOCABULARY AND CONCEPTS IN THE SPARK STORY

Compelling

Convincing, gripping, persuasive, inviting

Deacon

Clergyman

Depository

Person to whom something is entrusted, store, reservoir, stockpile

Ensemble

Working collaboratively as a group, as one, often associated with a group of artists such as musicians or dancers.

Penitentiary

Prison, jail

Percussion

Musical reference. Derives from the Latin term, "percussio" - "to beat, strike" in the musical sense, rather than the violent action. Musical instrument, or any object which produces a sound by being struck, shaken, scraped, or by an action which causes sound by vibration.

Prevalent

Prevailing, dominant

Remanded

Recommitted into custody

Sonically

Involving sound

Tonality

Relationships between tones in a musical scale. System of music in which pitch relationships are based on a key.

Transcendent

Inspiring, uplifting, awe-inspiring

Transient

Fleeting, passing, ephemeral short-lived

Unrefined

Raw untreated or processed, unsophisticated, crude

Vilified

Despise, disparage, malign, denigrate

SECTION IV – ENGAGING WITH SPARK

STANDARDS-BASED ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSION POINTS

An Introduction to Jazz

Discuss jazz music with students. What do they know about it? Where does it come from? What purpose does it serve in communities today and what purpose has it served historically, especially in communities that have been oppressed? Emphasize that jazz came from slaves living in the United States who were deprived of their rights and possessions. They created songs to sustain themselves spiritually, to foster community through an independent culture, and to find solace and comfort.

Have students bring in a CD of jazz music and ask them to be prepared to play five minutes (or one song) from their selection. They may need to ask their parents or friends for suggestions. If they don't own jazz music CDs, suggest they check them out from the local library.

Begin an exploration of the jazz genre by playing five or six of the songs selected by students. Ask them to identify who wrote and performed the music for each song.

Move on to examine the instrumentation in detail. Working in pairs have students respond to the following questions after each song is played a second time.

- Identify the instruments played in this song e.g. wind, string, brass and percussion instruments.
- What is the role of each instrument, i.e. which instrument creates the supporting rhythmic and harmonic structure and which instrument has a more melodic function?
- Identify the parts of each song, such as the introduction, chorus, bridge, etc.
- Is the song in AB form, or ABA form?
- Is there any call and response in the structure of the song?

- Describe the mood, or tone of the song. What mood or response does the song evoke in you?
- Does the mood change or stay the same? At what points in the song is there variation?
- Describe the role of the vocals and lyrics, if any.
- Do the vocals evoke mood?
- Are there elements in the music that sound like other genres, like hip hop, gospel, folk, blues, etc.?

Share responses to these questions in the larger group and then ask students to write a 500 word essay about one of the songs, drawing upon the group discussion. Suggest that students include a paragraph which references the history of the piece, both in terms of genre and historical tradition.

Listening to Howard Wiley

Play the Spark episode on Howard Wiley and invite students to work in pairs (or groups of three) to respond to a selection of the questions listed above. Can they discern the main melodic theme in Wiley's songs? Does the melody remain in one part of the song, or carry over to another instrument? Do vocals play a significant or secondary role in the message of his songs?

Ask students questions that specifically pertain to Wiley's music.

- What is his mission or purpose?
- How does he describe his work in the Spark episode?
- What appeals to him about jazz and the saxophone in particular?
- How does he explain the roots of his music?
- Why does he feel that the history of the South is important to his music?

- Why does Wiley feel that the history of the Angola penitentiary is important, and how did it inspire *The Angola Project*?

Ask students to remain in their pairs or groups of three and write a list of words that they would use to describe Wiley's music or to describe the emotions his work evokes. The words can be emotions (happy, sad, remorseful, triumphant, etc.), adjectives (colorful, heavy, fast, etc.), or even free-association words that come to mind.

Encourage each pair to write a paragraph exploring their responses to Wiley's music, drawing upon some of the descriptive words they listed and Wiley's reflections upon the roots of his work. Students should refer to Wiley's comments in the Spark episode to support their assertions.

SPARKLER:

Encourage students to visit <http://www.sfjazz.org/about/index.asp> to view a selection of jazz concerts, festivals and events in the Bay Area that they may like to attend. They should also check the *Bay Guardian* for listings of free outdoor concerts at <http://www.sfbg.com/>

Music and History

Ask the class to name examples of songs, musicians, or musical genres that are intricately tied to historical events and movements. They may need to research this and come back with ideas.

Offer examples such as work songs which were sung by slaves throughout the world. The songs of former African slaves became spirituals, praise songs, field hollers, shouts, and chants. In America, this music formed the basis of the Blues.

In the sixties Bob Dylan sang protest songs that became known internationally and were identified with anti-war movements e.g. *Blowin' in the Wind* (1962), *Masters of War* (1963), *Talking World War III Blues* (1963). Remind students that the "Star-Spangled Banner" was inspired by American nationalism.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Star-Spangled_Banner#History

Discuss with students how music has been linked with political ideals. Ask them to think about the

connection between music, history and politics. To illustrate this discussion, ask them to bring in a recording of a song which has been connected to a social movement or to social protest. They should be prepared to explain the history of the song and the social and political background that inspired it.

Allow time to play the music and encourage students to engage with the lyrics or verse, and with the circumstances and feelings expressed through the music.

Angola State Penitentiary

Ask students to work in pairs and using the Internet, locate Angola, Louisiana on a map. Suggest they research the story of the Angola State Penitentiary to glean a sense of Howard Wiley's strength of feeling about this prison.

By the 1950s, Angola had a reputation for being one of the harshest prisons in America. Ask students if they can name and research one major U.S. historical event that took place in that period. What civil rights victories and struggles were taking place at this time? What was happening in the South, and particularly in Louisiana, that may shed light on the cruel environment that the Angola inmates endured?

Wiley describes the prison as still being a working and thriving plantation and finds it a source of inspiration for his music. Angola has also held many musicians and been the subject of a number of songs. Ask students to work together to build up a picture of the musical history of the prison

- Which singers and artists were held there?
- Which songs reference Angola State prison?

Invite students to share their findings and discuss the ways in which the songs and stories from the prison became a source of inspiration for Wiley's *Angola Project*.



<http://www.howardwiley.com/projects.htm>

SPARKLER:

Screen the 1998 Oscar-winning documentary on the lives of six inmates imprisoned in Angola: *The Farm: Life Inside Angola Prison*
<http://www.amazon.com/Farm-Life-Inside-Angola-Prison/dp/6305295867>

NOTE: Other films were also partly filmed inside the prison e.g. *Dead Man Walking* and *Monster’s Ball*

<p>RELATED STANDARDS - MUSIC</p> <p>Grade 4 – Historical and Cultural Context 3.1 Explain the relationship between music and events in history.</p> <p>Grade 6 – Aesthetic Valuing 4.2 Explain how various aesthetic qualities convey images, feeling, or emotion. 4.3 Identify aesthetic qualities in a specific musical work.</p> <p>Grade 8 – Historical and Cultural Context 3.2 Identify and explain the influences of various cultures on music in early United States history.</p> <p>Grades 9-12 – Aesthetic Valuing 4.4 Describe the means used to create images or evoke feelings and emotions in musical works from various cultures.</p>

Call-and-Response

Obtain a range of percussive instruments that students of all musical abilities can play (woodblocks, tambourines, hand drums, triangles, xylophones, etc.). If a piano is available, ask a student who is proficient on the instrument to play it. Make sure that every student has an instrument to play. Divide the students into three groups, regardless of instrument choice.

Define the call-and-response musical technique: one rhythmic or melodic theme that begins in one part and is passed around through the instruments. Sometimes, when pitch is involved, the melody is exactly copied, and other times it's changed a bit but the rhythm remains the same. Conversely, sometimes the rhythm changes, but the pitch remains the same. Call-and-response is an important element of jazz music.

Lead the group in a call and response musical exercise by setting a steady 4/4 beat. The structure of the exercise could look like this:

Everyone playing together:
1 2 3 4
[play four times]

Two groups continue the beat:
1 2 3 4

while you set a new rhythmic theme (CALL):
1 2+ 3 4
[play twice, then return to playing on the beat]

Then ask the third group to copy your rhythmic theme (RESPONSE): 1 2+ 3 4 [play twice]

Continue setting new rhythmic themes for one group to copy. Try to create more and more advanced rhythms, including triplets and polyrhythms, if possible. Here are a few thematic ideas ("1e+" means a triplet rhythm, or three notes per beat; and "1e+a" means four notes per beat, or a sixteenth rhythm):

1e+ 2+ 3e+ 4+
[repeat]

1e+a 2+ 3+ 4e+a
[repeat]

You can also take verbal phrases and turn them into a call-and-response idea.

After the jam session, begin a discussion about the challenges of call-and-response were. Was it challenging to keep the rhythm exactly the same as the caller? Did it ignite a sense of unity between classmates?

SPARKLER:

*Divide the class into groups of three or four. Have each group create and perform their own call-and-response song in ABA form. The groups might need to get together after school to work on their song. This activity works better in music classes where students have access to their own instruments, or if instruments can be taken home. Emphasize that the call-and-response technique must be a significant part of their songs.

RELATED STANDARDS - MUSIC

Grade 2 – Artistic Perception

1.5 Identify visually and aurally individual wind, string, brass, and percussion instruments used in a variety of music.

Grades 9-12 – Artistic Perception

1.5 Analyze and describe the use of musical elements in a given work that makes it unique, interesting, and expressive.

RELATED STANDARDS - MUSIC

Grade 2 – Creative Expression

2.4 Improvise simple rhythmic and melodic accompaniments, using voice and a variety of classroom instruments.

Grade 5 – Creative Expression

2.3 Compose, improvise, and perform basic rhythmic, melodic, and chordal patterns independently on classroom instruments.

Grades 9-12 – Creative Expression

2.5 Perform on an instrument in small ensembles, with one performer for each part.

RELATED STANDARDS - LANGUAGE ARTS

Grades 9 & 10

1.0 LISTENING AND SPEAKING STRATEGIES

1.1 Formulate judgments about the ideas under discussion and support those judgments with convincing evidence.

1.0 WRITING STRATEGIES

1.1 Establish a controlling impression or coherent thesis that conveys a clear and distinctive perspective on the subject and maintain a consistent tone and focus throughout the piece of writing.

For more information about SPARK and its educational content, including the Visual & Performing Arts Standards, visit the Web site at <http://www.kqed.org/spark/education>.



For more information about the California Visual & Performing Arts Standards, visit the CA Dept. of Education at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/index.asp>.