

# A Musical Journey: Imani Winds

Tuesday, March 27, 2007

11 a.m. – 12 p.m. ET

Grades 5-8

When viewing *A Musical Journey: Imani Winds* and participating in this guide's suggested activities, the following National Standards for Music will be addressed: 6, 8, 9.

## About the Program

### Musical Multiculturalism

When you think of a woodwind quintet, what type of music do you hear in your head? Do you hear the music of European composers like Joseph Haydn, Ludwig van Beethoven, and Franz Schubert? What about music associated with other parts of the world, such as Africa and Latin America?

Formed in 1997, Imani Winds is a woodwind quintet that focuses on illuminating the connection between culture from the African diaspora, (the word “imani” means “faith” in the African language Swahili) and the classical music in their repertoire. Demonstrating that classical music is much more diverse than usually thought of, they perform compositions by French composers Maurice Ravel and Jean Françaix, as well as music by Latin American composers Heitor Villa-Lobos, Paquito D’Rivera, Astor Piazzolla, Mario Lavista, and Lalo Schiffrin.



### What is a Woodwind?

A woodwind instrument is characterized by its sound either being produced by blowing air across the edge of a hole (flute, recorder), or across a vibrating reed (clarinet, saxophone), or between a pair of vibrating reeds (oboe, bassoon). Pitch in a woodwind instrument is controlled by selectively covering finger holes or keys. While many of these instruments were originally made of wood, modern woodwinds can be made of wood, metal, or plastic.

### What is a Woodwind Quintet?

The instruments of a woodwind quintet include flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, and French horn. But why is the French horn, a brass instrument, included in the woodwind quintet? The French horn produces sound by buzzing into a mouthpiece, not blowing across a hole or a reed. It uses valves and tubes to control pitch, not finger holes. It is part of a woodwind quintet because it can provide tonal functionalities of both woodwind (color) and brass (power) instruments.

### What is “World Music?”

The term “world music” refers to any form of music that is not part of popular Western commercial music or classical music traditions, and which typically originates from outside the cultural sphere of Western Europe and the English-speaking nations. This includes traditional music from African, Latin, Asian, and even Native American Indian folk music. World music is based on the folk traditions of individual cultures and nations, and frequently employs rhythms, tonalities, and timbres that can sound very exotic to ears attuned to music of the Western world.

### Bridging the Musical Gap...Then

Composers of European classical music have often written works influenced by cultures around the world. Some composers known for this “worldly influence” include Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, W. S. Gilbert, Giacomo Puccini, Antonín Dvořák, and Johannes Brahms.



One of the strongest examples of cultural traditions influencing Western music is jazz. Jazz developed in New Orleans and other southern African American communities more than 100 years ago. When Africans came to America, they brought their musical traditions. Later, the music, sounds, and instruments of other American peoples inspired them. Jazz is characterized by blue notes, syncopation, swing, call and response, polyrhythms, and improvisation. It has been described as “America’s Classical Music.”

### Bridging the Musical Gap...Today

Many popular modern musicians have incorporated elements of world music into their work, including The Beatles, Led Zeppelin, Paul Simon, Peter Gabriel, David Byrne, and Sting. Similarly, Grammy®-nominated Imani Winds “mixes it up” by featuring classical, jazz, spirituals, and contemporary music in their performances. Along with performing, two members of Imani Winds also compose for their quintet, often combining Afro-Cuban and American jazz influences into their music. Students will not only hear music from around the world, but Imani Winds will discuss the origins of the modern wind instrument and the cultural connections that exist between musical genres.

## Instructional Activities

### Explore Your Musical Heritage

Think about the history and the cultural traditions of your family. Where did your ancestors live before they came to America? What are the musical traditions of that culture? Find out more about the sounds, styles, and instruments used in the music of your ancestors.

### Listen Closely

What influences can you find in the music you like to listen to? Do you hear jazz, classical, or world music elements in popular music? Identify the traditions that have helped create the music that most appeals to you.

## Resources

### Internet

[imaniwinds.com](http://imaniwinds.com)

### Print

Baines, Anthony. *Woodwind Instruments and their History*. Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1991.

Tilton, Jeff Todd. *Worlds of Music: An Introduction to the Music of the World's People*. New York: Schirmer, 2004.

### Recordings

Imani Winds.

*Imani Winds*. Koch International Classics, 2006;

*The Classical Underground*. Koch International Classics, 2005;

*Umoja*. (Self-Produced), 2002.