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Illustration by Tim Bowers

# *Acoustic Rooster's Barnyard Boogie: Starring Indigo Blume*

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*A musical guide to the world of characters and  
stories created by Kwame Alexander*

# Musical Terms & Fantastical Facts:

*Acoustic Rooster LOVES to rock out on his acoustic guitar!*

The **acoustic guitar** is a popular instrument in the string family, made up of six steel strings and a hollow wooden body. The vibrations of the strings are amplified through the guitar's bridge and soundboard, giving it that warm, sweet, melodic sound. The acoustic guitar "sings" on its own... it does not need to be plugged into an amplifier, like its sibling, the electric guitar. In fact, just like Rooster, you can play the acoustic guitar by simply using your fingers or a guitar pick to gently pluck the strings. And, you can take an acoustic guitar almost anywhere and everywhere you go.

*Mules TOOTS the trumpet.*

TOOT-TOOT! The **trumpet** is a lively instrument in the brass family, full of life and golden, rich sound. It's been around for a long time. In fact, this instrument dates back over 3,500 years. So how does it get its snazzy, jazzy sound? A trumpeter "buzzes" their lips as they blow into the mouthpiece. The air vibrates down the trumpet and the sound dances out of the bell. The trumpeter also uses fingers to press down on the valves and pushes the slides back and forth to make just the right pitch and sound. Give it a try sometime!

*Duck can really jam on that piano.*

The **piano** is a musical instrument that has wire strings that make a sound when struck by felt-covered hammers, which are moved after a player taps the keys with their fingers. If you count all the black and white keys, you will notice there's 88 in total. There are also seven octaves! It has the widest range of notes of any instrument, and the songs you can compose on the piano are endless. The piano is versatile, and can be used in every genre of music.

*Those gals really sang' their hearts out!*

*Indigo, Dairy, and Chickee really have range (and we don't mean free range on the farm)!*

Like all the characters in the musical, you can use your **voice** as an instrument, too. When you sing, you are making music, thanks to something called vocal cords (aka vocal folds) located in your voice box (aka larynx) inside the neck. There are no two voices just alike, so your voice is a unique instrument to share with others, whether you are speaking, reciting a poem, or singing a song. Just as an instrument must be tuned, so must your voice. There are warmups and special exercises to practice to keep your voice healthy and performance ready. Don't be afraid to set your voice free!

*All that jazz!*

**Jazz** is a form of music developed by African Americans in the late nineteenth century. A blend of African and European musical traditions, it is truly an American cultural creation. It is music that relies on rhythm with "bent" and "blue" notes and a lot of improvisation. Improvisation means that jazz performers often make up songs, or parts of songs, on the spot. This is not an easy thing to do, but it is a great deal of fun. Many jazz songs also have "call and response" in them, which has one musician calling out with an instrument or voice, and another responding with a musical "answer." It's a conversation in a song. Grab an instrument or use your voice to scat, chat, sing, and jam with a friend.



# Musical Terms & Fantastical Facts:

## The Hen from Ipanema...

**Bossa Nova** is a mellow style of jazz that was created in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, during the 1950s by artists like Antônio Carlos Jobim and João Gilberto. It encompasses the African rhythms and beats of samba, along with Portuguese lyrics and American jazz music. It has a cool, laid-back, beachy vibe. The song "The Girl from Ipanema" by Antônio Carlos Jobim and Vinícius de Moraes was once the world's most played song, just after the Beatles' song, "Yesterday." In our musical, Acoustic Rooster performs his own Bossa Nova tune called "Cucuricu," which is inspired by the way Brazilians describe the sound a chicken makes. Acoustic Rooster, of course, says, "Cocka-doodle-doo!"

## Dairy's songs are full of southern charm and twang!

**Country** is a style of popular American music that originated in the south and west. Its roots are steeped in folk songs and ballads, often with a country twang. The instruments are varied, just like the voices of those who sing country songs. If you listen to a country music station or album, you'll often hear the steel guitar, bass, and drums...sometimes the autoharp, banjo, fiddle, and more. Country singers love to tell stories of hardships and woes in their songs. If you want to create something rewarding and entertaining (it can also be funny), write about a no-good-awful day and sing about it to your family and friends.

## Let's rock 'n' roll!

**Rock 'n' roll**, like jazz, is a popular music that comes out of the African-American tradition. Musicians like Chuck Berry and Sister Rosetta Sharp combined elements of jazz, R&B (rhythm and blues), gospel, and country, then added electric guitars, electric bass, drum kits, and keyboards to create this wild and intense musical expression. Within rock 'n' roll music, there are subgenres, too, such as classic rock, funk, punk, alternative, progressive, hard, indie, and heavy metal. Like a rollercoaster ride, a rock song is often fast paced with a rise and fall of emotions. With electric instruments and loud, booming vocals, rock music will NEVER put you to sleep.

## Did you hear Chickee rap? Squawk-a-dee!

**Rap** is a unique American form of music that uses rhythm, rhyme and spoken word performed over an instrumental beat to express a thought, tell a story, or share an observation (and sometimes all three). With its roots in West African storytelling, blues and jazz, and African-American poetry, it was created on the island of Jamaica and in the streets of New York City. It is one of the most popular music genres today, and there are many new rap artists that arrive on the scene each year. The words they rap are just as important as the beats they create, and both will keep you thinking and dancing, smiling and chanting! Just ask Chickee!

## Hip hop until you don't stop!

**Hip hop** is a cultural movement that includes rap, poetry, dance, theatre, literature, deejaying, visual arts (like graffiti), and fashion. It was born in the Bronx in New York City as a uniquely African-American lifestyle of expression and shared experiences, but the love for this cultural phenomenon has spread across the globe, loved and lived by kids and adults from Paris to Poland. We all love to hear *a little flava in ya ear*.



# Musical Terms & Fantastical Facts:

*And we do it all with soul.*

**Soul music** was born from blues clubs, street corners, and Black churches. When gospel songs and melodies were changed into secular lyrics for everyone to sing, regardless of religion, the result was this new vocal-driven music. It is often a mixture of up-tempo rhythm-and-blues and has an expressiveness that is contagious. It has strongly influenced other genres like R&B, funk, dance music, and HipHop. Soul music is good for your soul.

*Pick It Up!*

Did you know the song “Pick It Up” in the musical is a Go-go piece?

**Go-go** originated in Washington, D.C., in the 1970s. It is said to have been created by guitarist and singer Chuck Brown. It has a sound that is influenced by salsa, funk, soul, and blues. Its rhythm and heavy use of drumming on percussion instruments (including congas) make this music undeniably enjoyable to listen to, as you try to keep up with the colorful beat. A Go-go band has multiple percussionists, keyboard players, and a string and horn section. There are often call and response sessions in these songs involving the audience. The beat in this style of music can go on for hours and hours because listeners just can't get enough.

*We got some Go-go and some BEBOP!*

**Bebop**, also known as “bop,” is a style of instrumental jazz music that combines a lot of improv and has a unique sound that falls somewhere between cool jazz and big band swing. It has a fast tempo, and includes instruments such as the piano, one to three trumpets or saxophones, drums, and a double bass. The unpredictable rhythms and challenging harmonies of leading Bebop musicians like Charlie “Bird” Parker and Sonny Rollins always keeps listeners (and other musicians) on their toes.

*I've got the blues over the news.*

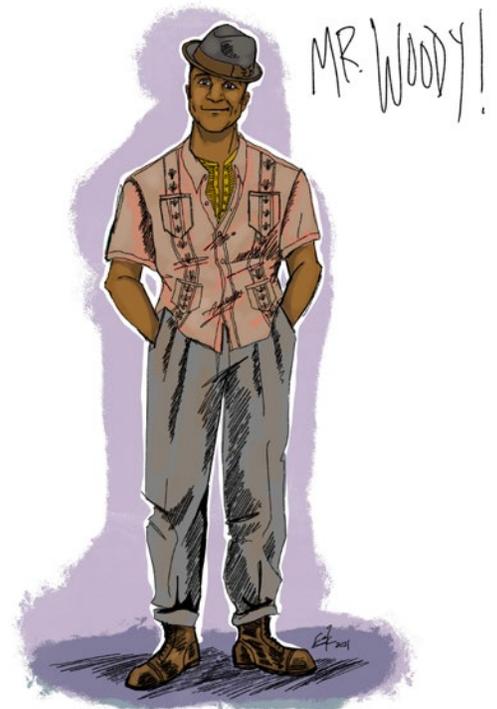
**Blues** is a form of folk music originally created in the south in the early 20th century out of the field hollers, work songs, and spirituals of enslaved African-American. This expressive vocal and lyrical genre, often with a somber tone, uses an electric guitar and metal slide for a soulful effect, and has had a strong influence on jazz, rhythm and blues, rock 'n' roll, and country music. While country singers tell stories, blues singers express the anguish and the hopes. Some people might say, “I'm kind of blue,” when they're feeling down, and this kind of music does a great job of expressing the blues.

*I'm singing about the Barnyard Boogie...Barnyard Boogie Blues...*

**Boogie** is a style of blues that is usually played on the piano with a repetitive rhythm and groove, and a fast, strong beat to keep the energy alive and moving. The word “boogie” is also used to describe dancing to popular pop, rock, jazz, or blues music. Let's boogie!

*You are amazing, you are so cool...*

A **ballad** is a narrative verse that can either be a poem or become a song. When a ballad is a song, it usually has a slower tempo with lyrics that tell stories of love or difficult times. Ballads make beautiful, heartfelt songs and tend to be packed with emotions. Have a Kleenex nearby because sometimes ballads can make you cry.



## The characters from *Acoustic Rooster's Barnyard Boogie: Starring Indigo Blume* are inspired by some real-life legends. Read on!



**Miles Davis:**  
*“Do not fear mistakes. There are none.”*

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The character Mules Davis was created because of the famous jazz trumpeter, flugelhorn player, composer, and bandleader, **Miles Dewey Davis III** (May 26, 1926-September 28, 1991). When Miles was 13, his father introduced him to the trumpet. He began to take lessons and was soon hooked on practicing, learning everything he could about this instrument. He started playing professionally in high school, and by age 17 was invited to perform on stage with jazz artists Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker. He enrolled in The Juilliard School (once known as the Institute of Musical Art), but eventually dropped out to pursue his jazz career full-time. Miles ended up becoming one of the most celebrated jazz artists of the twentieth century, releasing dozens and dozens of albums. He was always willing to grow and change with the times, and his innovative and improvisational musical style ensured that he would be remembered as a jazz G.O.A.T. (greatest of all time). His music is still played and celebrated by countless listeners today. Check out his album *Kind of Blue*, the most popular and bestselling jazz album of ALL TIME, to get a feel for how cool Miles Davis' music was and still is...even today!



**Duke Ellington:**  
*“A problem is a chance to do your best.”*

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Duke Ellington is the lovable, quirky animal version of the great **Edward Kennedy “Duke” Ellington** (April 29, 1899-May 24, 1974), an American pianist, big-band leader, composer, and arranger. Duke was born in Washington, D.C., and raised by musically gifted parents. By the age of seven, he was taking piano lessons. It was during this time that he landed the nickname Duke because of his polished manners. He composed his first song at 15 and started playing music professionally by age 17. Many of his songs have become American standards, like “I Got it Bad and That Ain’t Good,” “Take the A Train,” and “In A Sentimental Mood.” He performed in Broadway nightclubs, toured in Europe, and made hundreds of song recordings with his bands. The originator of big-band jazz, he was awarded a posthumous *Pulitzer Prize Special Award* for music in 1999 and is considered one of the greatest musicians in the history of jazz. Another G.O.A.T.



**Dolly Parton:**  
*“Find out who you are. And do it on purpose.”*

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In our musical, the character Dairy Parton is our “hats off” to the country music legend and actress, **Dolly Parton** (born January 19, 1946). She is known for her number one country hits like “Jolene,” “I Will Always Love You,” and “9 to 5.” She is also famous for her sparkly boots and clothes, her love of books (having founded Imagination Library), and her amusement park called Dollywood. Dolly grew up one of twelve children in rural Appalachia, where she learned how to sing and play the guitar from her mom and other family members. She started performing at church at a young age, and not too long after she received her first guitar from a relative, she began composing her own tunes. By age ten, she was performing on television and radio shows. She even debuted at the Grand Ole Opry at just 13 years old. Once she graduated high school, she moved to Nashville to chase her dream of becoming a country music star. She has since won many awards and written thousands of songs, even for other recording artists. She continues to make country music history by creating albums and singing her songs before millions of fans.

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### Nicki Minaj:

*“Your victory is right around the corner. Never give up.”*

Chickee Minaj is the vibrant and confident character based on the strong and proud **Onika Tanya Maraj-Petty**, aka **Nicki Minaj** (born December 8, 1982). Nicki is a Trinidadian-born singer, songwriter, and actress known for her bold lyrics and fire-rapid rap style. When she was around five years old, her family moved from Trinidad to Queens, New York, where she started writing her first rap songs. As she embarked on her music career, she worked as a backup singer at first, but ended up taking center stage. All her hard work and talent paid off, as she has won eight American Music Awards, twelve BET Awards, seven BET Hip Hop Awards...the list goes on. She has been called the Queen of Rap and it looks like she might hold on to that title.



### Acoustic Rooster:

*“Luck is good, but believing in yourself...waaaaay better.”*

**Acoustic Rooster** uses his voice and acoustic guitar to share his music. His character is inspired by a mix of gifted musicians, just like all the musical genres he performs onstage with his band. His talent, confidence, leadership, and showmanship fall somewhere between American bassist Jaco Pastorius and American jazz guitarist Wes Montgomery. If Acoustic Rooster gave you some advice, it would be to practice whatever you love to do and believe in yourself.



### Indigo Blume:

*“When we’re together, there’s nothing that we can’t do.”*

**Indigo Blume** is based on brave young people like you who want to accomplish amazing things on this earth...like keeping your community clean and green, growing a rooftop garden of dreams, or sharing your musical and artistic talents with family and friends. Remember, you are a star wherever you decide to shine in this world!

*The music in this musical is meant to make you snap your fingers, sing along, smile from ear to ear, and throw your hands in the air and wave’em like you just don’t care. This is a get up and dance show, people!*

-Randy Preston, Composer