

2002/2003 UMS

YOUTH EDUCATION



Sweet Honey in the Rock

University Musical Society
Teacher Resource Guide

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About UMS

The goal of the University Musical Society (UMS) is to engage, educate and serve Michigan audiences by bringing to our community an ongoing series of world-class artists who represent the diverse spectrum of today's vigorous and exciting live performing arts world.

Since 1879, strong leadership coupled with a devoted community have placed UMS in a league of internationally-recognized performing arts series. Today, the UMS seasonal program is a reflection of a thoughtful respect for this rich and varied history, balanced by a commitment to dynamic and creative visions of where the performing arts will take us into this new millennium. Every day UMS seeks to cultivate, nurture and stimulate public interest and participation in every facet of the live performing arts.

UMS has expanded greatly and now presents the very best from the full spectrum of the performing arts: internationally renowned recitalists and orchestras, dance and chamber ensembles, jazz and world music performers, opera and theater. Through educational endeavors, commissioning of new works, youth programs, artists, residencies and other collaborative projects, UMS has maintained its reputation for quality, artistic distinction and innovation. The University Musical Society now hosts over 90 performances and more than 150 educational events each season. UMS has flourished with the support of a generous community that gathers for performances in venues throughout Ann Arbor, Ypsilanti, and Detroit.

While proudly affiliated with the University of Michigan, housed on the Ann Arbor campus and a regular collaborator with many University units, UMS is a separate non-profit organization that supports itself from ticket sales, corporate and individual contributions, foundation and government grants and endowment income.

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Sweet Honey in the Rock

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2002/2003 Teacher Resource Guide

Youth Performances
Tuesday, January 7, 2003
10 - 11am and
12 - 1pm
Michigan Theater, Ann Arbor

Sponsored by



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SHORT ON TIME?

We've starred the most important pages.

ONLY HAVE 15 MINUTES TO PREPARE YOUR STUDENTS?

Try the Word Search on p. 47.

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Bernice Johnson Reagon, founder of Sweet Honey in the Rock.
Photo courtesy of the artist at <http://academic2.american.edu/~breagon/Index.htm>.

OVERVIEW

Coming to the Show



Cendrillon Youth Performance
April 2002

We want you to enjoy your time in the theater, so here are some tips to make your youth performance visit successful and fun!

How do we get off the bus? You will park your car or bus in the place marked on your teacher's map. Only Ann Arbor Public Schools students and students with disabilities will be dropped off in front of the theater.

Who will meet us when we arrive? UMS Education staff will be outside to meet you. They might have special directions for you, so be listening and follow their directions. They will take you to the theater door, where ushers will meet your group. The ushers know that your group is coming, so there's no need for you to have tickets.

Who shows us where we sit? The usher will walk your group to its seats. Please take the first seat available. (When everybody's seated, your teacher will decide if you can rearrange yourselves.) If you need to make a trip to the restroom before the show starts, ask your teacher.

How will I know that the show is starting? You will know that the show is starting because you will see the lights in the auditorium get dim, and a member of the education staff will come out on stage to say hello. He or she will introduce the performance.

What if I get lost? Please ask an usher or a UMS staff member for help. You will recognize these adults because they have name tag stickers or a name tag hanging around their neck.

What do I do during the show?

Everyone is expected to be a good audience member. This keeps the show fun for everyone. Good audience members...

- Are good listeners
- Keep their hands and feet to themselves
- Do not talk or whisper during the performance
- Laugh at the parts that are funny
- Do not eat gum, candy, food or drink in the theater
- Stay in their seats during the performance

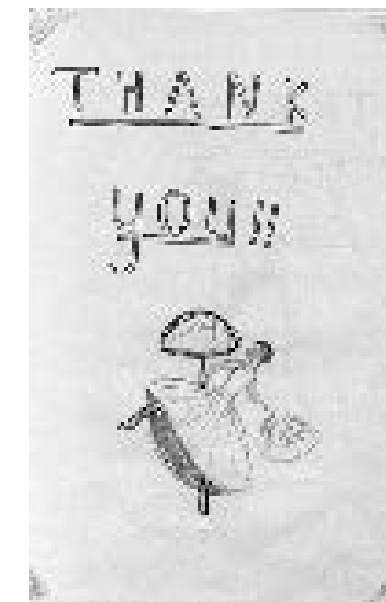
How do I show that I liked what I saw and heard? As a general rule,

the audience claps at the end of each performance. This clapping, called applause, is how you show how much you liked the show. Applause says, "Thank you! You're great!" The louder and longer the audience claps, the greater the compliment it is to the performers. If you really enjoy the show, stand and clap at the end. This is called a standing ovation.

What do I do after the show ends? Please stay in your seats after the performance ends, even if there are just a few of you in your group. Someone from UMS will come onstage and announce the names of all the schools. When you hear your school's name called, follow your teachers out of the auditorium, out of the theater and back to your buses.

How can I let the performers know what I thought? We want to know what you thought of your experience at a UMS Youth Performance. After the performance, we hope that you will be able to discuss what you saw with your class. What did your friends enjoy? What didn't they like? What did they learn from the show? Tell us about your experiences in a letter, review, drawing or other creation. We can share your feedback with artists and funders who make these productions possible. If you had a wonderful time or if you didn't enjoy the experience, we want you hear your thoughts. Please send your opinions, letters or artwork to:

Youth Education Program
University Musical Society
881 N. University Ave.
Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1011
Fax: 734-647-1171



Student Response to
Alvin Ailey
Youth Performance,
February 2001



Balé Folclórico da Bahia Youth Performance
October 2001

Sweet Honey In The Rock At A Glance

Who is Sweet Honey in the Rock?

Sweet Honey is a Grammy® Award-winning African American female a cappella ensemble with deep musical roots in the sacred music of the Black church - spirituals, hymns, gospel - as well as jazz and blues. The Sweet Honey experience is like no other. Five African American women join their powerful voices, along with hand percussion instruments, to create a blend of lyrics, movement and narrative that variously relate history, point the finger at injustice, encourage activism, and sing the praises of love. The music speaks out against oppression and exploitation of every kind. The quintet, whose words are simultaneously interpreted in uniquely expressive American Sign Language, demands a just and humane world for all. (Courtesy www.sweethoney.com)

Who is her founder and leader?

The group evolved out of a vocal music workshop led at the DC Black Repertory Theater by Bernice Johnson Reagon, who is also a Professor at American University in Washington, DC. For more about Dr. Reagon, see her biography on page 14. For more about the early years of Sweet Honey, see her essay on p. 15.

How did Sweet Honey in the Rock get her name?

The group named itself after a Biblical parable. In the parable, there is a land so rich that when rocks are cracked open, honey flows from them. The women of Sweet Honey like the metaphor: that African-American women are as strong as rock and, at the same time, as sweet as honey. For more about Sweet Honey's early years, see Dr. Reagon's essay on p. 15.

What kinds of songs does Sweet Honey sing?

Sweet Honey draws from many musical traditions, including rap, gospel, Civil Rights songs, folk tunes, spirituals, jazz, and other traditions. Each performance features a "caller," someone who decides what the group will sing. Oftentimes, the singers don't know what is coming next until it is announced onstage by the caller during the performance! This keeps each performance fresh and interesting and allows the caller freedom to select music based on the audience's feedback and reactions.

Why is Sweet Honey so important to the deaf community?

Sweet Honey is one of a handful of musical ensembles in the world that has a sign language interpreter as a permanent, equal member of its ensemble. Sweet Honey's sign language interpreter is Shirley Childress Saxton, who uses American Sign Language to communicate the moving, thought-provoking lyrics of Sweet Honey to the deaf community.



SweetHoneyintheRock.Clockwisefromcenterfront:BerniceJohnsonReagon,founder;NitanjuBoladeCase;ShirleyChildressSaxton, sign language interpreter; Ysaye Maria Barnwell; Carol Maillard; Aisha Kahlil. Photo courtesy of the artist.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS



Who is Sweet Honey In The Rock?

I have always believed art is the conscience of the human soul and that artists have the responsibility not only to show life as it is but to show life as it should be... For a quarter of a century, Sweet Honey In The Rock has withstood the onslaught... Her songs lead us to the well of truth that nourishes the will and courage to stand strong. She is the keeper of the flame.

- Harry Belafonte

Sweet Honey now begins another season, still on the journey more than a quarter of a century after her first concert performance at Howard University, November 1973. According to music historian Horace Boyer writing in the Introduction to Continuum, the name Sweet Honey In the Rock has its own unique history:

On February 28, 1927 in Memphis, Tennessee, the blind sanctified singer Mamie Forehand recorded a refrain based on Psalm 81:16. In this passage of scripture, the poet and musician David advised his people that if they would serve the Lord, they would be rewarded by being fed "honey out of the rock." While Forehand titled her song, Honey in the Rock and sang those words, random congregations soon added the adjective "sweet" to the title, and the song has come down through history as "Sweet Honey in the Rock."

Growing up in Southwest Georgia, Reagon (REE-gun) heard the song sung by quartets, and although she had never sung it herself, it was a song that was constantly singing in her head as she called together a group of the strongest singers from her vocal workshop with the D.C. Black Repertory Company. It was 1973, and that evening the first song she taught the group was "Sweet Honey in the Rock." In her own words:

After they got the chorus harmony just right, I said, "That's the name of the group." Then I had to call my father, a Baptist minister, and ask him the song's meaning. He told me that it was a sacred parable, and that the parable itself was not found in the Bible, but it told of a land so rich that when you cracked the rocks, honey flowed from them. I can still remember how comforting I felt about the idea of singing inside of such an active powerful phrase.

As Sweet Honey evolved into an ensemble of African American women, so did their understanding that the legacy of African American women in the struggle for the survival and continuance of their people was that land that was so rich, that when one cracked the rock, honey flowed forth. Reagon noted that there are several qualities the members associate with rock. "trench and consistency is always sometimes too much associated with us, and to add to that in inner quality, to understand that inside that strength was honey – sweet and nurturing – help to reveal the balance we as African American women know is there. As a name, Sweet Honey In The Rock has been integral to creating this way of journeying as a singer and cultural activist, and African American woman."

The past season gave the group several new opportunities, one of the most moving was participating in creating the soundtrack for a film produced by the Documentary Institute at the University of Florida. Narrated by Ruby Dee and Ossie Davis, this important documentary, Freedom Never Dies, tells the story of Harry T. Moore, a state leader for the NAACP in Florida who spearheaded the voter registration of African Americans in that state during the 1940s, and was the key unrelenting voice in demanding an end to racist practices in the state. His work was driven by his belief that one had to work and organize to create change. One of his quotes was: "Freedom never descends upon people. It

is always bought with a price." A bomb assassinated Moore and his wife on Christmas Eve in 1951. Langston Hughes wrote the "Ballad of Harry T. Moore" and read it at a memorial in New York City held by the NAACP. Bernice Johnson Reagon was asked to look at the ballad and set it to music, using the African American folk ballad style perfected by the Golden Gate Quartet. Reagon set the ballad to music and Sweet Honey recorded it for the soundtrack. Additional music was composed and performed by Reagon, and her daughter, Toshi Reagon, and Aisha Kahlil of Sweet Honey performed "Strange Fruit." This story is important because the Moores' work and death has been left out of most accounts of Civil Rights Movement organizing. Sweet Honey considered it an honor and key to why they exist to be asked to assist in the correction of this oversight.

Tempere, Finland's Vocal Festival, is built around an international competition of mostly a capella choirs, choruses, and small ensembles. At the end of each day sessions of competition, groups gather to hear virtuoso performances by singers from all over the world. Sweet Honey In The Rock traveled to Finland this past June to perform their special repertoire of African American vocal singing for this special audience of singers.

With work extending beyond the concert stage, Sweet Honey was featured in the sound track of the HBO TV movie, Boycott, a 2001 film about the historic 381-day Montgomery Bus Boycott sparked by the arrest of Rosa Parks. That momentous boycott resulted in the rise to leadership of the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., and the U.S. Supreme Court decision declaring illegal the practice of segregated seating on Alabama's buses. The film soundtrack features Aaron Neville and Sweet Honey performing "Ella's Song," composed by Reagon in tribute to organizer-activist Ella Baker, who worked in Montgomery during the boycott.

With composer James Horner, Sweet Honey created and recorded the soundtrack for this film Freedom Song, produced by Danny Glover and directed by Phil Robinson. This project tells the story of Bob Moses and student organizers of SNCC (Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee) arriving in McComb, Mississippi and joining with local leaders and students to launch a voter registration campaign.

Sweet Honey continued her annual young people's concerts in honor of the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday with performances in Boston sponsored by the Algebra Project and MIT; in New York City at the Washington Irving High School, and in their home base of Washington, C.C., at the Union Temple Baptist Church. This weekend of events was capped by a live appearance on ABC's Good Morning America, on the actual holiday morning.

The group's latest recording, Still the Same Me (Rounder Records) was nominated for a Grammy and received the Silver Award from the National Association of Parenting Publications.

ONLINE CONNECTION

Hear the women of Sweet Honey introduce themselves and read about their individual lives.

www.soundzImpossible.com/shir/bio/members.swf



Ysaye Maria Barnwell.
Photocourtesyoftheartist.

Ysaye Maria Barnwell is a native New Yorker now living in Washington, DC, where, since 1979 she has performed with Sweet Honey In The Rock, and written many of the ensemble's contemporary compositions. Dr. Barnwell spends much of her time off stage working as a master teacher and choral clinician in cultural performance theory. She has conducted her workshop, "Building a Vocal Community: Singing in the African American Tradition" all over the United States, Great Britain and Australia, for both singers and non-singers. A prolific composer, Barnwell has been commissioned to create a number of dance, choral, film, and stage productions. As an actress her credits include a principle role on the television series "A Man Called Hawk" and an appearance in the film *Beloved*, directed by Jonathan Demme. Barnwell produced TWENTY-FIVE... (RYKP Records), Sweet Honey's 25th anniversary recording, and edited *Continuum: The First Songbook of Sweet Honey In The Rock* (A Cappella/Hal Leonard, 1999). Her first children's book, *No Mirrors In My Nana's House* (Harcourt Brace, 1998) based on her composition by the same name, was illustrated by Synthia Saint James. *Um Humm* (Windhorse Productions/Sounds True Label), her recording of personal and traditional stories and songs, was released in 2000.



Nitanju Bolade Casel.
Photocourtesyoftheartist.

Nitanju Bolade Casel came to Sweet Honey bringing her unique performance experience in African vocal styles, jazz, improvisational rhythms, and hip hop after four years of study, performance, and cultural organizing in Dakar, Senegal. While in Africa, Casel co-founded with Marie Guinier, ADEA (Artistes des Echanges Africaines – Artists for African Exchange), an organization dedicated to the exchange of ideas and services between African artists of the diaspora. Joining Sweet Honey in 1985, she has expanded the ensemble's repertoire through her original compositions and contemporary arrangements of traditional African songs. Her extensive training, research, and teaching experience in African-derived traditions has its base in those pioneering communities of the late sixties which led the way to redefining and making accessible African expressive culture in the United States. Bolade's compositions have been included in the elementary music textbook *World of Music* (Silver Burdett & Ginn); and *The Box*, a TV pilot from Robert de Niro's Tribeca Production Company. Casel also appeared in the Smithsonian production *Duke Ellington's Great Ladies of Song*. She is currently co-director, with her sister and Sweet Honey colleague Aisha Kahlil, of First World Productions, a cultural and educational performance arts organization. Casel made her film debut in *Beloved*, directed by Jonathan Demme. Nitanju Bolade Casel is wife of Mfundishi Tayari Casel and mother of Obadele Jumoke Ajamu Jaja Bayete Casel.

Aisha Kahlil joined Sweet Honey in 1981. As an experienced performer of jazz African song and dance traditions, she moved the ensemble into new ground in the exploration of vocal improvisation. Kahlil is Sweet Honey's strongest blues singer, a genre she had not explored before coming to the group. In 1994, CASA (Contemporary A Cappella Society of America) named Kahlil Best Soloist for her performances of "See See Rider" and "Fulani Chant." Some of the group's most innovative and experimental work occurs in the performance other compositions including "Fulani Chant," "Wodaabe Nights," and "Mystic Ocean." "Wodaabe Nights" was included in the 1998 PBS film series *Africans in America*. "Fulani Chant" has also been included in the soundtracks of the films *Down in the Delta*, directed by Maya Angelou, and *Climb Against the Odds*, a film produced by the Breast Cancer Fund. In her work as a performing artist and master teacher in voice and dance, Kahlil specializes in the integration of traditional and contemporary forms of music, dance, and theater. Her credits as vocalist and dancer include the Raymond Sawyer Dance Theater, Sounds of Awareness, Sundance, and the African Heritage Dancers and Drummers. She has taught at the Institute for Contemporary Dance, Leslie College, Dance Works, Dance Place, Joy of Motion, and the Levine School of Music. Kahlil is currently at work on a recording project of her original compositions and arrangements.



Aisha Kahlil.
Photocourtesyoftheartist.

Carol Lynn Maillard is an original member of Sweet Honey in the Rock. As a student at Catholic University, she majored in theater and brought her passion for the stage to the DC Black Repertory Company, where he worked as an assistant to Bernice Johnson Reagon. Maillard is an accomplished film, television, and stage actress. Her Broadway and off-Broadway credits include performances in *Eubie*, *Don't Get God Started*, *Comin' Uptown*, *It's So Nice to Be Civilized*, *Beehive*, and *Forever My Darling*. She also appeared in the Negro Ensemble Company productions of *Home*, *Zooman*, and *The Sign*; and with the New York Shakespeare Festival in *Spunk*, *Caucasian Chalk Circle*, and *Under Fire*. Maillard can be seen in the feature films *Beloved* and *Thirty to Life*. She has also appeared on television. As a vocalist, Maillard can be heard with Horace Silver on his Blue Note recording *Music of the Sphere*, Betty Buckley's live concert recording *Betty Buckley at Carnegie Hall*, and *Sounds of Light* (SYDA Foundations Inspirational Recordings). Maillard's arrangement and lead performance of the spiritual *Motherless Child* (RYKO Records, TWENTY-FIVE), is heard as a part of the sound track of *The Visit*. A native of Philadelphia, Ms. Maillard lives in New York City with her son Jordan.



Carol Maillard.
Photocourtesyoftheartist.



Bernice Johnson Reagon.
Photocourtesyoftheartist.

Bernice Johnson Reagon, singer, composer, scholar, and activist, organized Sweet Honey In The Rock in 1973. She is Distinguished Professor of History at American University and Curator Emeritus at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History. Reagon is the author of *If You Don't Go, Don't Hinder Me* (Nebraska Press 2001), editor and author of *We'll Understand It Better By and By: Pioneering African American Gospel Composers* (Smithsonian Press 1992), and, with Sweet Honey, author of *We Who Believe in Freedom Sweet Honey In The Rock ... Still on the Journey* (Anchor Books 1993). Reagon was featured in the 1992 Emmy-nominated PBS documentary *The Songs Are Free: Bernice Johnson Reagon with Bill Moyers*. She has served as music consultant, producer, composer, and performer on several film projects including the Emmy Award-winning *We Shall Overcome* (Ginger Productions), *Roots of Resistance* (Roja Productions), *Eyes on the Prize* (Black-side Productions), and the Peabody Award-winning *Africans in America* for PBS. In 1994, Reagon served as conceptual producer and host narrator for the Peabody Award-winning radio series *Wade in the Water: African-American Sacred Music Traditions*. She curated an exhibition of the same title for the Smithsonian Institution Exhibition Service and produced a CD anthology recording of sacred songs for Smithsonian/Folkways Recordings. Bernice Reagon is mother of Toshi and Kwan Tauna Reagon and grandmother to Yvonne Christine Virkus Reagon and Tashawn Nicole Reagon. Daughter Toshi and her band Big Lovely will perform with Sweet Honey in their concert for the general public on Friday, January 10, at 8pm at the Michigan Theater.

Shirley Childress Saxton is a veteran professional Sign Language interpreter having learned American Sign Language from her Deaf parents. For more than a quarter of a century, she has worked providing Sign interpreting services in a wide range of life situations including education, employment, legal, medial, and performing arts and music. Saxton conducts master workshops in Sign interpreting music. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Deaf Education and is a certified member of the Registry of Interpreters of the Deaf, Inc., which published a tribute to her in an article entitled, *Shirley Childress Johnson, The Mother of Songs Sung in ASL*. She has been recognized for her work in Deaf advocacy with awards from Women Unlimited, Deafpride, Inc., and the Silent Mission at Shiloh Baptist Church in Washington, DC. She has published three articles on experiences on her experiences as a child of Deaf adults in *We Who Believe in Freedom: Sweet Honey In The Rock ... Still on the Journey*; *Continuum: The First Songbook of Sweet Honey In The Rock*, and *Souls of My Sister: Black Women Break Their Silence, Tell Their Stories and Heal Their Spirit*. Her sons, Reginal and Deon, both sign. Shirley is married to long-time friend Pablo Saxton.



Shirley Childress Saxton.
Photocourtesyoftheartist.

Biographical information courtesy of Sweet Honey In The Rock.

Excerpted from Bernice Johnson Reagon's chapter "Let Your Light Shine" in *We Who Believe in Freedom*.

I Never Sing a Traditional Song Unless...

I grew up in a region that had developed a strong sacred-music singing tradition, in a Black Baptist community in Dougherty County, Georgia, 176 miles south of the capital, Atlanta. For our first eleven years, our church, Mt. Early Baptist, had no piano. Like most of the rural churches in that region, we did all of our singing unaccompanied except for our feet and hands; to this day I am an a capella singer. I still know the songs I sang as a child and have hundreds of songs I have collected as a scholar.

As a singer, I use songs to keep balance in my life. No matter how old a song is, when I sing it, it should be contemporary for me, if I am to bring honesty in my rendering of it. Otherwise, it becomes a historical relic and is dead.

Usually there is a song running around in my head. Most of the time it is an old song. When it begins to get louder and its presence begins to nudge, I know two things. One, it will stay in my head until I give it life in the air by singing it out loud, and two, I can probably sing it with an understanding of how it applies to my life.

"Sweet Honey in the Rock" was the song running around in my head for weeks before I called the first rehearsal for the group. It was 1973, and I was living in Washington, DC, with my two children and attending graduate school at Howard University. I became the vocal director of the DC Black Repertory Company (the Rep). The group Sweet Honey In The Rock was to come out of my vocal workshops.

The first time I had ever faced trying to teach what I knew about singing was as the Rep's vocal director. I used everything I could think of to get the young women and men in my workshops to sing. They made use of everything I could come up with, children game songs, funeral songs, lullabies, African songs, new songs, old songs. Although we did a little rhythm and blues and gospel, our major focus was to work out of the musical structures of the older congregational-style songs. I tried to introduce the actors to the spiritual community and power created through that singing.

Because of the democracy in the African American congregational song style (there are no auditions, one has but to enter the congregation and find the courage to sing), I was open to including everybody in the singing. I came to my workshop with my own childhood memory of everybody in the church 'larmed up in full-bodied song. All of them could not have been great singers, yet they sang with as much power as they could muster and it sounded and felt good from inside the congregation.

I set up my workshop with strong, clear, rigid structures, so that members understood that they had an obligation not to waste their time or mine. I believed then, and still do, that being ahead of time is the only way not to be

Congregational Singing

In African-American congregational signing, a song is "raised." This is another way of saying that when the song is started by a song-leader, it is not yet fully developed—it requires more voices to come in and help raise the song to its fullest expression. All members in the group are members of the congregation.

In congregational singing, the songs can be different genres: spirituals and hymns are the most widely used in sacred services. Sometimes, you know the song because you have heard and sung it many times. Sometimes the song is new, but the tune is one that you have sung with other lyrics. Sometimes you know is not the specific tune or lyrics, but you know the form or the shape of the song, and as it is repeated you catch on.

Leader begins:	I see the sign.
Group answers:	Yea.
Leader calls again:	I see the sign.
Group responds:	Yea.
Leader:	See the sign of the judgment.
Group:	Yea Lord, time is drawing nigh.

After a few rounds, even if you have never heard the song before, you can pick up the response, or answer, that is sung by the congregation.

This musical form is called call-and-response. It was brought over from Africa by slaves and is found in many styles of African-American music. It is also present in much contemporary popular music.

Psalm 81: King James Version

¹ Sing aloud unto God our strength: make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob. ² Take a psalm, and bring hither the timbrel, the pleasant harp with the psaltery. ³ Blow up the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed, on our solemn feast day. . .

¹³ Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways! ¹⁴ I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries. ¹⁵ The haters of the LORD should have submitted themselves unto him: but their time should have endured for ever. ¹⁶ He should have fed them also with the finest of the wheat: and with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied thee.

driven by time. If you participated in my workshop sessions, you knew the rules and you met them. If you were late, you were not allowed to join the session, and to stay in the workshop you were responsible for material covered. I felt people cleaning cobwebs out of their minds just by gathering the energy to get to my workshops on time. When we began and they were there, they were open and ready.

In the Beginning

During my second year as vocal director in 1973, Louise Robinson, LeTari, Smokey, and Carol Maillard began to talk about forming a singing group. I was asked to organize it and put the music onstage.

After hearing this suggestion a few times, I responded in my usual way. As a Black girl-child, I grew up being socialized to serve – my family, my community, my people. If someone else needed me to do something, it automatically became my responsibility. This is not always a good thing. Now I take suggestions and suggestions and keep them at a distance until I check to see if they are compatible with my own list. But in 1973, the vision of others had a direct line to my sense of duty and my sense of self. And thus, in response to Louise’s nudging, I called a rehearsal of about ten of the strongest singers in my workshop.

The first song I taught this group was “Sweet Honey in the Rock.” I had never sung the song before in my life. When the group that first night got the chorus right, I said, “Hum, that’s the name of the group, Sweet Honey In The Rock.” I heard people trying it out, tasting the phrase on their tongues, under the voices, and then they said, “Yeah, Sweet Honey In The Rock. Yeah, that’s cool.”

After the rehearsal, I called my father, the Reverend Jessie Johnson, a Black Baptist minister, and asked him about the song and its meaning. He told me that it was based on a religious parable, but that it was not found in the Bible. This parable described a land that was so rich that when you cracked the rocks, honey would flow from them. From the beginning, the phrase – with sweetness and strength in it – resonated in a deeply personal way with me. It was another two years before I understood that for me and for the group, this land where the rocks were filled with honey was beginning to take shape and sound under the shade of that song as the experience and legacy of African American women in the United States of America.

As African Americans and as women, we have had to have the standing power of the rocks and the mountains. This quality often obscures the fact that we are sweet like honey. Inside the strength, partnering the sturdiness, we are – as honey is sweet – sweet. If our world is warm, honey flows, and so do we; if it is cold, honey gets stiff and stays put, and so do we. That first night, I only knew that I had found the name of the group and that I would have to grow into knowing how it would work in my life.

We met several times, with new people coming in and others dropping out, but we never found a working chemistry. So after a few efforts and re-efforts during that summer, I let it go. Louise came to me one day and said again that the singing group was a good idea and that we should do it.

So I called another rehearsal of Sweet Honey In The Rock in the fall of 1973. I was there; Louise was there; Maillard was there; and Mie was there. After working with six to ten people, I felt a letdown. But being the strict disciplinarian I was, I started the session. We started the singing and it was good. We sang another song and it was good. I kept calling songs and there were all there, every note! After a while, we stopped – we believed, we looked at each other and said, “This is it!” And it was. It was as if Sweet Honey In The Rock, the child, through a prolonged labor, had finally been born.

Discovering Who She Was/We Were

Since the beginning, Sweet Honey has been a process, always being defined by whatever part of the path we happened to be traveling at the time, keeping a clear link to our history of struggle and survival. The day-to-day work of being a graduate student and parent, working at the Rep, and now moving the group kept my gaze closely focused on making the next step steady. If the wider world would ever be open to us, I had to make sure we were turned toward the sun; I did nothing that might limit future opportunities. However, I saw my primary work as deciding what the next move would be. It could be as simple as the next rehearsal, the next songs to learn, the next performance, what we would wear, who could be present. From its inception, this was a group that came from women who had many other things to do in their lives every day. Sweet Honey would never be the only thing we did. We would always, as we gave her what she needed, also be working to fulfill the other spaces in our lives.

Little about the group was clear to me before it happened. I knew we were a group of Black singers. Being an artist offering songs and signing from the African American struggle was the strongest ground I could stand on and be in the world. However, I did not initially envision that it would be a group of Black women singers. I did not know that it would start as four singers or that I would, as a composer, begin to itch because I prefer to have five or six lines to work with in many of my arrangements and compositions. We did not overtly know that I was the leader (though everybody knew it inside). I did not know that as years passed it would become clear that Sweet Honey In The Rock was a woman who was always more than the total of the individual women who moved to the stage lending our all so that she could be.

I walk Sweet Honey In The Rock as a path, a way, a discipline; I do not create the path, but I make my own tracks in a mountainous road. Sweet Honey is that way, is that path. All I have to find is the courage to walk this “narrow” way.

To sing a Sweet Honey concert, it is necessary to sing songs in the 19th century congregational style, as well as the performance styles required for arranged concert spirituals, quartet singing, early and classical gospel, jazz, West African traditional, rhythm and blues, and rap – all in the same evening.

- Bernice Johnson Reagon

Women Will Go and Women Will Come

An early hard lesson I had to learn about Sweet Honey was that the women who made up this group would leave. I initially did not want to face getting a new singer and not knowing where the new singer would come from.

I began to use Sweet Honey meetings to build the leadership structure of the group. All issues came to the table. I started the practice of asking that everyone be heard on such questions as what political rallies we would sing at, what benefits we would do. If a letter came in from someone requesting the group, it was read at the meeting.

In the early days, it was rough going, and the women had to learn to participate. As the leader, I would orchestrate the process and make the hard decisions, but I grew to understand how important it was to make decisions for the group with the discussion ringing in my head. We made sure that each year we would be working with a larger group than the singing ensemble, and we would invite the substitute singers to come in to listen to the new material, and if we needed a new singer, maybe the workshop would provide.

Then the day came when there was no personal stress about personnel; I finally got it inside – in my center – that in Sweet Honey women would come and women would go and women would come, and that that was never a sign that the group was in trouble; it was a characteristic of the group. Sweet Honey was professional, but part-time, it attracted best those women who had family, community, and other career interests and that alone sometimes meant they stayed until they had to leave.

This was not always comforting to our growing audiences, who sometimes became attached to a certain singer. When we bring in a new signer, we do not try to replace the singer who has vacated a position. We bring in the new singer and begin to work to re-create this Sweet Honey statement drawing on the contribution that this new congregant ensemble can make. Often the repertoire is the same, the new singer learns old parts, but no one can replace a line woven in the heart of another artist. You have to look at the whole composition, learn the notes and timing of your line, and find your own way of weaving it into a new life when it is called in a concert.

The Voice and the Sound

To sing a Sweet Honey concert, it is necessary to sing songs in the 19th century congregational style, as well as the performance styles required for arranged concert spirituals, quartet singing, early and classical gospel, jazz, West African traditional, rhythm and blues, and rap – all in the same evening. Capacity and virtuosity differ from singer to singer, but everyone is challenged to move with intelligence from one sound palette to another, changing the places where the sound is produced in the body. The health and strength of the instrument [the voice] are crucial.

One of the major attractions of the group for potential Sweet Honey members and our audiences was the primacy of the voice as instrument. New sing-

ers coming into the group who had had experiences as lead vocalists fronting bands or small combos talked about how refreshing it was to be in an ensemble where the singer, the voice, was the primary concern of a rehearsal and a performance. So many people in our audiences ask, "Why don't you use instruments?" And I respond, "We do use instruments – our voices."

When the voice is the central instrument, then the care of the instrument is essential. I urged the singers to consider the condition of their instrument their first and very personal responsibility. No one else could tell them what felt vocally comfortable for them. If while singing they felt a tickle or scratch, their instrument was signaling a discomfort that a thinking singer would never ignore. I could give them parts to sing in a song, I could ask them to try new areas, but they had to determine what was or was not possible for them to perform. A correct assessment of whether they could perform the part was important because not only were we a capella singers, we also used no pitch pipe; the singer who started the song set the key. All of us had to learn to set the key not only for our individual comfort zone but so that when the song was raised, we would have an ensemble. Thus when you led a song you needed to know the parts – who sang the highest and lowest lines – and you had to have some sense of their range.

What is challenging about unaccompanied singing is that one's sense of key changes with each performance space and your sense of comfort changes with age. Ysaye and I like higher keys more now than when we started in the group, while Aisha often favors lower ones. When I am in a larger room, I like a higher key, but I also have to try to consider whether the top lines in the arrangement I am leading can survive that key; for a singer in Sweet Honey, knowing the composition and the harmony system allows her flexibility – if the key of a song throws her line too low or too high, she can restructure her lines for comfort in delivery. This is possible only if you know the entire composition, a lot more than your part.

One foundational principle of the group was the importance of working with a voice teacher, forming a relationship with someone you trusted with your instrument. My voice teacher at the time was Frederick Wilkerson (Wilkie), who taught me that every singer can learn something by standing in front of someone whose only purpose is to try to help them find vocal health.

Sweet Honey's Voice is Nurtured in Church

At some point in our concerts we sing to honor the contribution the Black church has made in our lives and in the survival and transformation of our people as a people in this land. The women of Sweet Honey learned to sing in the church, and there are elements of the African American church experience that we invite people into whenever we come to a stage. We try to invite people to come to a table and be fed, to learn, to rest, to laugh, to cry. Many tell us that this is a different musical experience from their usual concert fare. Many of our church songs come from my singing in church as a child; I have enjoyed sharing these songs with audiences all over the world.

A CAPELLA

Singing without instrumental accompaniment.

All of the energy of our living goes into our singing during our concerts. We are sharing so much more than a concert of songs. We are calling our people together. Singing gave us something to use as a weave and a connection.

To sing in a group which has come from many places within African America, to an audience from a wide spiritual background, and then to talk about finding contemporary solace in an old song like "Jesus Is My Only Friend" stretches many boundaries. The range and the tolerance of our audiences give me hope that there can be a world that accepts many cultures and belief systems. There is a way to practice through our living, of being of oneself and among others at the same time. It happens in every Sweet Honey concert. In our performances we touch so much of the common human experience, we are given the room we need to be also different sometimes, even as we are embraced because we are the same.

Sweet Honey has always been a mixed group; we all come out of Christian backgrounds but have journeyed far and wide in search of a spiritual path: Unitarian, Baptist, no church, Muslim, African traditional spiritualism. And the search continues.

All of the energy of our living goes into our singing during our concerts. We are sharing so much more than a concert of songs. We are calling our people together. Singing gave us something to use as a weave and a connection. The songs helped us to find a oneness that was needed to continue to survive the place we were in. In our concerts I want a song and a singing experience that create community in our audiences right in the rooms we are in. I learned about creating a community of song growing up singing in church in South-west Georgia.

It is important that when people come to our concerts they do not come to forget the day's troubles, to be taken out of themselves. We are not entertainers, though hopefully our singing entertains. I am not saying that entertainers do not do good work. People sometimes need to get away from everything and have fun and be in a different space. That is, though, not the purpose of a Sweet Honey concert. By going inside ourselves and singing specifically out of our lives, our community, and our world, we try to help those listening, in the sound of our singing, to create a celebration based on what they can embrace that is real to them at that time. And again, it is in church that I learned how to create that space. Our audiences are often urged to help us out with the singing, to embrace all that makes up who they are. With those experiences and with that load, they can lift and celebrate being alive at this time with this opportunity to choose, to be clear, and to be heard.

Sweet Honey's Repertoire

During the Civil Rights Movement, in Albany Georgia, all of the songs sung in the rallies that took place in a local church were church-based songs. In the movement office, in the streets, and sometimes in jail, we snag the freedom songs based on rhythm-and-blues tunes. The SNCC Freedom Singers, the group of singers I sang with during the early sixties, sang a range of songs that went further than the mass-meeting church-based repertoire. In our concerts, we would sing popular folk songs, traditional ballads, love songs, as well as those songs that distinguished our group, the freedom songs created as a Movement voice. When Sweet Honey began, I had been singing a capella for

several years and had no intention of ever being on the stage with less than the full range of African American music forms.

The determination to be expansive in our repertoire evolved out of my experience with my first solo recording, *The Sound of Thunder*, produced in Atlanta in 1965 by a local Episcopal priest, Father Robert Hunter, and myself. On this album were church songs, hymns like "When I Take My Vacation In Heaven," spirituals like "Steal Away" and "Pastures of Plenty," by Woody Guthrie, a blues song I wrote called "Black Woman's Blues," the work song "Sound Like Thunder" (the title song), two Langston Hughes poems that I set to music, two songs I had learned from the Georgia mountain singer Hedy West ("Anger in the Land" and "Li'l Birdie"), Guy Carawan's "Ain' You Got a Right," as well as the gospel-styled "This Train Is Bound for Glory."

Most of the album was a capella, but some songs were accompanied by flute, congas, and bass. When I sent the recording to an agent to review to help me get some concert performances, she wrote back that I needed to make up my mind about what kind of singer I was going to be – a gospel singer, a folk singer, or a blues singer, and she said some pieces could pass for jazz! I thought about it for a while, and concluded that everything on the album came out of me and from my experiences, all of which did not fall into one category. How could I choose to do music from one corner of my life?

Sweet Honey's existence as a professional ensemble would not limit our choice of categories or genres of music or singing styles. We would only be bound by our own ability to master the compositions we selected. This was a crucial decision because it meant that I was placing myself and Sweet Honey outside of conventional marketing categories. To this day, people ask, "Where can I find your records?" I say, "Look under folk, women, groups, gospel, world music; nag your record store owner."

I don't do music to scale Top 40 charts, and neither does Sweet Honey, although there is no reason why Sweet Honey should not be there. It makes singing in Sweet Honey an ongoing experiment, a centering, expansive and unlimiting learning experience, and it makes a Sweet Honey concert a more affirming, echoing place for the human spirit moving through this widely varied world. So we sing church songs, and political songs, and children's songs, and songs about death, and songs about falling in and out of love.

During the first four or five years I was the dominant songwriter and bore primary responsibility for repertoire. I recognized early that all of the musicians I was working with had strong and widely varying compositional potential; I structured the group to stimulate the other singers to also assume responsibility for repertoire. I had seen groups that were one-writer or one-leader groups. But I was particularly drawn to the Roberta Martin Singers, the gospel group that helped to establish what became the classical choral sound of gospel. Each singer in that group was a soloist, and each (if she or he stayed in the group) began to write and record songs.

To this day, people ask, "Where can I find your records?" I say, "Look under folk, women, groups, gospel, world music; nag your record store owner."

THINK ABOUT IT

How
is singing
like a
conversation?

I found another model from my childhood in the games I had played, where everyone was both a leader and a follower. In Sweet Honey, I found that my leadership style came from the lessons I had learned as a child. I tried to create a structure that expected new ideas to come from all members, and thus I urged the singers to bring in new songs and I set up sessions assigned to individual members to stimulate action. Sweet Honey's music palette hanged as her singers became songwriters, composers, and arrangers.

There have been times when things happened in my world that I felt strongly about and I had no song that would speak for me. I have found my voice within the songs of my sister composers. These women/singers/composers give me a range I could never have alone.

Then there is the composition in performance, the times when things happen that you have never heard before. My breath leaves and I come to myself and I am not singing . . . and I have to say, "Sing your part, Bernice, sing your part . . ." and I do the best I can in view of the circumstances.

Taking Stands

It is an amazing time to be an artist and try to be a participant and commentator in the world. Sometimes there is so much happening on any given day you wonder how you can absorb everything and not shut down. Having a Sweet Honey concert means there is another opportunity to be clear about the things we care about in the world. One of the most important of those opportunities is that we celebrate our lives by taking a stand. If there is a major crisis in the country, a Sweet Honey concert of Sweet Honey music is a way to begin to affirm where one stands on the issue. Many people tell us they come to a concert to work things out, to get energy.

Sweet Honey Dress

When we walk onto a stage, we look good! Sweet Honey In The Rock upholds the legacy of the history of African American women; you can even see it in our clothes. From the first performance in 1973, our dress has been a cultural ensemble statement. We wore adapted bubas, a West African dress, made of a rectangle with openings for the neck and arms that drop to the floor. The side of the dress falls from the arm to the floor and drapes and flows as the arm is moved. A woman with a buba in her closet can dress her sister – any sister – beautifully. We decided that the women of Sweet Honey would always have bubas in our ensemble closets. We bought fabric of the same kind and had it designed in different patterns for each woman. It was clear that when we went to the stage we would have some outfits of similar fabric and patterns that created an ensemble look. Within this range individuals worked with designers to select different colors, necklines, sleeves, and headpieces.

Coming to an ensemble statement in dress at different times with different singers has been hard for me. Through the years, I have struggled personally with my sense that it was a waste of the people's time to talk so much about

clothes. Put on the buba and let's go. But the women who struggle to bring life to Sweet Honey had ideas and needs, and we had to talk and experiment through trial and error until we determined that the Sweet Honey dress policy had to have a wider range of creativity. We looked for ways to achieve a balance between honoring our historical legacy in a visual statement and responding to changing ideas of the power and beauty of African American women.

Sweet Honey Concerts are Conversations

Sweet Honey concerts are conversations with the audience. We come out and take a seat, since we are going to talk together. We many times walk into a conversation. Our audiences are so intense, everyone checking each other out, that sometimes we walk in and have to say "excuse me" to the air charged with nonverbal attitudinal exchange. We come out and try to answer why we have all come together in this place, using the songs and singing of the African American legacy as language.

When we come out and sit down on chairs, the opening song is usually gentle. In a conversation, it's better to say hello, no need to show off and try to find a showstopper in the first response. At first, I never knew what song I was going to call, it was all inside. By the time I walked on the stage, I was in a truly meditative state, I belonged to Sweet Honey. Often I started preparing for Sweet Honey concerts one or two weeks before. It was a seamless process where I felt myself headed for the stage. By the day of the concert things were still very much inside, but much more forward. I remember times when I would be dressing for the concert, not talking to anybody. Evie was the first to realize that I was not to be disturbed. I didn't know consciously that I was on my way somewhere else, so I couldn't tell anyone else. I first became aware of Evie's efforts to protect this pre-concert meditation space for me and then I could name it as a space I needed clearly enough so that the people working with and around us could understand.

As the programmer, I would be on the stage and would sit down and call a song or start a song and the conversation would continue. At a Sweet Honey concert, the programmer is the person steering the discussions. Here the concert becomes a composition of the programmer. The singers turn themselves over to the programmer's composition and try to fulfill her efforts to communicate. We can shake off a song if we can't sign it, and the programmer is responsible for selecting another song, finding a way through songs to keep the conversation going.

I like singing songs that come into my mind onstage that have never been performed by the group. This doesn't happen often, but it's important within the Black tradition. Many of the songs I know, I have learned in performance – during worship services and not in rehearsals. There are no rehearsals in the congregational tradition. Don't get me wrong: Sweet Honey rehearses, plans, arranges, prepares – it's one of the hardest-working groups I have ever had the opportunity to work with – but one vital area of preparation is being ready to compose in performance; being able to learn a song as you sing it. It is what

We come to you
You in every color of the
rainbow
With your freedom and
struggle stances
In every position of the
moon and sun

We come to you
Offering our songs and the
sounds of our Mothers'
Mothers

In libation
To everyone of us

There really is a community
We have seen and felt and
been held by you
These ten years

There really is a community
Lovers
Searchers
Movers into life
Fighters and builders

- Bernice Johnson Reagon

Excerpted from *We Who Believe in Freedom*, pp. 68-69.

ACTIVITY: Design a Set of Clothes for Sweet Honey

Older students may do this from their imaginations. Very young students may color in Dr. Reagon's robe in the Lesson Plans section.

SOUND CHECK

A rehearsal before a performance when the singers practice with microphones while the sound engineer adjusts the volume and balance of the sound in the auditorium.

A sound check lets everyone get used to what their voices sound like in that particular theater.

we ask of our audiences every time I give you parts of a song to sing you have never heard, and I like keeping the group in touch with what you the audience face when asked to join in and lend your voices to the Sweet Honey chorus.

We use sound checks for trying out songs we were not certain about. To be a leader in Sweet Honey, one has to be a servant, one has to seek counsel from everyone and be willing to reformulate on the basis of the information given. If you want to sing a song and a singer says, "Not today," then as leader, programmer, you have to learn to accept with grace and support. And guiding that structure was and has been hard, challenging, sometimes scary, and a precious gift to me.

The first responsibility of the programmer is to her singers. She uses the sound check to become familiar with the group. If she has begun working on the concert before the sound check (and hopefully she has), there's a conceptual Sweet Honey that she brings to it. The session then becomes a reckoning between what she wants and the real Sweet Honey that is manifested that day on the stage. Sometimes there is a big gap between what a programmer has been conceptualizing and what the individual singers can conjure up as Sweet Honey.

Sweet Honey is a microphone group. Many people who hear our singing say, "Oh, you should not use a sound system, your beautiful voices can fill this room with no effort." Well, they don't know that our group has always been womaned by singers with voices of different timbres, strengths, and colors and that it is the visibility of these differences that makes the Sweet Honey sound distinctive. The sound system allows us to create a balance with each other. For us the sound system becomes an instrument that we play in concert with the sound engineer.

Sign Language Interpretation

Through the prodding of some of our concert sponsors we began to find a new audience in the Deaf community. Today, Sweet Honey travels with a Sign language interpreter. That was not always the case. It began with Holly Near [a folk musician], who had performed concerts that were interpreted for the Deaf community. When the same women who produced Holly Near contacted us to perform for their local production companies, they introduced us to a new kind of cultural event.

These producers explained to us that they also wanted to serve their local Deaf communities and asked whether we, Sweet Honey, would work with a Sign language interpreter. Even though I could not see how a capella music could be accessible to the Deaf community, I agreed to cooperate. When I was asked to send in the list of songs and the lyrics, I couldn't; I never programmed a concert except on the stage and I never wanted to know six weeks in advance what Sweet Honey would sing. Reluctantly, I began to work with local interpreters who would show up at our sound check and begin to sign for our songs. During one rehearsal, when we sang a song that had the word "Africa" in the text, the interpreter put her fingers through her nose to make a

ring. I asked her to repeat the sign to be sure she had used it. I then asked her to find another sign, to which she responded by spelling the word out.

When I tried to have discussions with some of our local producers about using Black Sign language interpreters, they seemed to feel that I was bringing the race issue into a situation where race did not apply although to that date all of the interpreters were White and women, a decision that ignored the multiracial makeup of local Deaf communities. I was muddling through and in need of some help, and help was on the way.

One Sunday in August something touched me and said to go to All Souls' Unitarian Church; I am obedient child, so I sat in a pew in the front of All Souls'. The senior minister was on vacation, and they were using lay ministers. As I was wondering what I was doing there, a Black woman came up front and began to sign everything the speaker said. Then she sang "He Ain't Heavy, He's My Brother," and signed while she sang, and I who was lost was found and fed at the same time.

I rushed up to her afterward and introduced myself. Our help had arrived. Here was Dr. Ysaye Maria Barnwell, speech pathologist, singer, choral director, and Sign language interpreter. She had one of the warmest bottoms (vocal range) I had ever heard in a woman singer, unused except in teaching choral work. She was also to find, in Sweet Honey, her upper range, which was also spectacular.

As Ysaye began to discover her vocal instrument, she began to talk to us about what it would take, if we were committed, to make our music accessible to the Deaf community. She taught us that the lyrics of our songs were poetry, and that they needed to be translated into another language, American Sign Language (ASL) or English Sign Language (ESL) or a combination of both; and in some cases a kind of pidgin [simplified] Sign would best accommodate the spirit of our lyrics. To do a good job, an interpreter needed time with the lyrics and also time in rehearsal.

Ysaye suggested that we find an interpreter to work with us. I was stubborn. It meant another person, and I didn't want to hear it. It meant expanded resources, working and traveling with six people instead of five, and it meant an unknown. But she was firm. By the end of the workshop, she had made it clear that although she could and often did sign and sing at the same time, she could not interpret and sing simultaneously. We asked her to choose whether she wanted to join Sweet Honey as a Sign language interpreter or as a singer and she chose to join us as a singer.

In 1980, Dr. B. introduced Sweet Honey to Shirley Childress Johnson [now Shirley Childress Saxton], who began to work with us as our Sign Language interpreter. Shirley agreed to work as a translator, and thus she traveled with the group when requested by a local producer or producers who would pay her way, her fee, and advertise in the Deaf community. These were the producers who had asked us to help them reach their local Deaf communities. And now

THINK ABOUT IT

Why would Reagon have been upset at the sign the interpreter used for "Africa"?

What sign would you create that would be more appropriate?

CREATE IT!

Imagine that Sweet Honey has hired you to design a poster for the UMS Youth Performances containing Toshi Reagon's phrase, "No adults allowed without children."

Create a poster and share it with UMS!

we were working out our own way of responding to the call. We decided that it was important that our interpreter be African American, and in response the Black Deaf community that has come to our concerts has thanked us many times for addressing what they often experience as racism within the Deaf community.

So in 1985, we began to talk about how important providing Sign language interpretation was to us. We had begun to include Shirley's picture on our albums and in our publicity photo shots and people were beginning to expect us to have her as a part of our entourage. This was brought home at a concert on an Ohio college campus, where the sponsors said they had no Deaf students and we would not need our interpreter so Shirley did not come. When we came out onstage there was a group of Deaf people who had driven some distance because they knew that at a Sweet Honey concert Shirley would be there. Ysaye had a challenging evening trying to deal with the situation and we had a policy discussion when we met again.

Sweet Honey decided that we would do everything in our power to bring along our own interpreter whenever we performed in a community where the sign language was ASL.

On Children

We have always had children in our audiences. Our entry into children's recordings was not planned. Through participation in an anthology recording, co-sponsored by Ben and Jerry's, we received a catalogue of the recording company releasing the anthology, *Music for Little People*, located in Redway, California. As I looked through the catalogue, I was impressed with the range of titles and their efforts to represent many cultures. I asked if they would be interested in Sweet Honey developing a recording for younger audiences. They agreed and *All for Freedom* was the result.

Our goal was to present a Sweet Honey In The Rock concert so that it would be accessible to families and especially to small children. We sent out a tape of our music to the recording company. They played it for some children and sent it back saying that the songs were generally too long and that the children walked out of the room on this song or that one. We ended up with a mixture of traditional material, some songs Aisha, Nitanju, and Ysaye remembered from summer camp days that were for fun, and songs that sang of friendship and play. Our most extensive work was on the songs that carried the message of freedom, and particularly the struggle of African Americans to be free in this land.

In December 1989 we performed our first concert for younger audiences since 1975. It was produced by Toshi Reagon [Bernice Johnson Reagon's daughter], who came up with the brilliant idea of putting "no adults allowed without children" on the posters. I began to get calls from my friends saying, "I'm coming to your concert, and I am borrowing my neighbor's child."

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by Horace Clarence Boyer

On February 28, 1927 in Memphis, Tennessee, the blind sanctified singer Mamie Forehand recorded a refrain based on Psalm 81:16. In this passage of scripture, the poet and musician David advised his people that if they would serve the Lord, they would be rewarded by being fed "honey out of the rock." While Forehand titled her song, *Honey in the Rock* and sang those words, random congregations soon added the adjective "sweet" to the title, and the song has come down through history as "Sweet Honey in the Rock."

Forty-six years after Forehand introduced the song, a quintet of African-American women, singing as a unit of the vocal workshop of Washington, DC's Black Repertory Theater company, organized an a cappella group and called themselves *Sweet Honey In The Rock*. It would not overstate the case to add the overworked – but definitely applicable – phrase "and the rest is history."

A female a cappella group was a strange sight and sound in 1973. This in itself seemed strange, for female singing groups have been a part of African-American musical history since the first quarter of the 20th century, when African-American male a cappella groups were organized. But the groups remembered and written about have been the piano-accompanied groups such as the Hyers Sisters, The Ward Singers, The Shirelles, and EN Vogue. Completely forgotten are the trailblazers, among whom were the powerful Virginia Female Singers, whose 1921 recording of "Lover of the Lord" has recently resurfaced. Little-known facts that have surfaced about this group and others that followed are that they used the voice classification of the male quartets (tenor, bass, etc.) and arranged their own songs. Moreover, the bass for the group could compete, without a handicap, with the bass of any of the male groups, including the famous Blue Jay Singers and the Birmingham Jubilee Singers.

Long forgotten are The Southern Harps, organized in New Orleans in 1935 and whose 1942 group was comprised of a lead, swing lead, alternate lead, tenor, baritone, and bass. Of particular interest is the fact that the lead was Bessie Griffin, who, in the 1950s, would emerge as a gospel superstar, while the tenor was Helen Matthews, featured in the 1970s Broadway musical *Purlie* under the name Linda Hopkins. Their hometown compatriots were the Jackson Singers, organized in 1936, a group that produced a sound not unlike The Southern Harps, with whom they were often paired in concerts.

Also forgotten are the Golden Stars of Memphis, organized in 1938, as well as the more famous Songbirds of the South, organized in the same city in 1940. Fortunately, one of its members, Cassietta George, made a significant musical contribution as a member of the Caravans.

Indeed, the African-American a cappella quartet or quintet was created during the last half of the 19th century and became a staple of American minstrelsy. It came into modern entertainment in 1905 when Fisk University, realizing it was too costly to send out their large group of Jubilee Singers, dispatched a quartet to replace them. African-American colleges and universities through-

ONLINE CONNECTION

Many people credit the Fisk Jubilee Singers with bringing African-American music to national prominence. For more about their history, visit:

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/singers/>

out the nation quickly organized similar groups, which inspired a battalion of Jubilee Singers in Birmingham and Bessemer, Alabama, in the second decade of the 20th century. Beginning with the organization of The Foster Singers in 1915, quartets of Jubilee Singers sprang up around the nation. The Fairfield Four were organized in 1921, The Dixie Hummingbirds in 1928, and these groups, in turn, inspired the organization of such secular music groups as The Mills Brothers in 1922, The Ink Spots in 1934, and the Delta Rhythm Boys in 1935. Sweet Honey In The Rock thus joined one of the most prestigious companies of music makers in the history of the United States.

Sweet Honey In The Rock

Sweet Honey In The Rock is uniquely distinct from all of these groups. She is even different from Mamie Forehand, though, like Forehand and these groups, she makes melody, harmony, rhythm, and message. And therein lies her unique quality: more than any group on the music scene today, "Sweet Honey" – as the group is affectionately called – carries a message. Absent from the group's songs are the "moon and June" rhymes, the pretty melodies with senseless words and any sign of the slightest fear of topical subjects. In fact, Sweet Honey is known as the group that will go where no other singers will go, textually.

At a concert of Sweet Honey, even before they open their mouths to sing, one is struck by the elegant, and, yes, beautiful attire of the singers. Clad in colorful dresses of the finest African and Eastern fabric, their heads are covered with striking (and intricately wrapped) turbans, or their hair is braided into elaborate designs adorned with ribbons and scarves. The singers grandly – and with a purpose – make their way to a group of chairs assembled in a semi-circle onstage and take their seats. Glancing briefly at each other, they burst into sound, a sound unlike any heard in many years. As often as not, they accompany themselves on rattles, gourds, or sticks. The song is that of sisters sitting around the fireplace singing songs of social commentary, a female choir in rehearsal, a congregation of Wednesday evening Prayer Services singers, or a village that has come together to sing through happiness, trials, or death. Even as the melodies, harmonies, and rhythms soar, one is immediately struck by the message of the songs, for the message is what Sweet Honey is all about.

In writing about Sweet Honey in *Epic Lives – One Hundred Black Women Who Made a Difference* (Visible Ink Press, 1993), Jesse Carney Smith notes "despite their name, which comes from a gospel song, Sweet Honey In The Rock's message is more often political (and social) than religious."

"I think everything is political," [member Bernice Johnson] Reagon stated in *People Magazine*. "We are about being accountable." To be sure, Sweet Honey has become the surrogate conscience of the United States in that her songs will not let us rest while there is still work to be done. Indeed, the topics of the songs range from the controversial Joanne Little case to the instructively ceremonial "Seven Principles," detailing, in English and Swahili, the principles of Kwanzaa. And the message is delivered without hostility or rancor but with the care of a friend and concerned loved one.

As the words of the songs become intense, Sweet Honey accents the meaning through a time-honored African-American practice of standing up and singing. The audiences, more than often, accept this as a sign for them, too, to show their involvement. They, too, stand, clap their hands, and sway to the music. Before long, the concert has turned into an ecstatic community revival. And clearly, Sweet Honey is the leader of the revival. Just as clearly, the group is the Greek chorus or community singers of our society, commenting on all matters of importance to the populace.

They are more than just community singers. These women, unlike the jubilee quartets of the 1920s, are not simply singers who, for lack of preparation or want of something else to do, or to make a living and contribution at the same time, fell into a singing group. They are educated (the group contains two members with earned Ph.D. degrees) and professional women who have accepted the charge of reminding us that we are all God's children. They have taken their songs and message not only throughout the United States and Africa but throughout Mexico, Germany, Australia, Japan, England, and Russia, among many nations.

About the Author

Horace Clarence Boyer, a graduate of Bethune-Cookman College and the Eastman School of Music, has been a professor of music at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst since 1973. He has served as a guest curator for the Smithsonian Institution and as a United Negro College Fund Distinguished Scholar-at-Large at Fisk University. A gospel singer, pianist, and composer, Dr. Boyer recently edited *Lift Every Voice and Sing: An African American Hymnal* for the Episcopal Church and is the author of *How Sweet The Sound: The Golden Age of Gospel*.

Excerpted from *Continuum: The First Songbook of Sweet Honey in the Rock*, compiled and edited by Ysaye M. Barnwell with Sweet Honey In The Rock (Contemporary A Cappella Publishing, 1999).

A Sign Interpreter's Song

By Shirley Childress Saxton, Interpreter for Sweet Honey In The Rock

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The goal and responsibility of a Sign Language Interpreter is to facilitate communication between Deaf and Hearing people. This is most effectively achieved by using the language of the Deaf, which is American Sign Language (ASL).

For many deaf people, music and singing are foreign media, and its relevance in their lives is debatable. Music is often perceived as another sound-based communication barrier, an instrument of discrimination and oppression of Hearing upon Deaf. So why would Deaf people be interested in a Sweet Honey In The Rock singing experience? Perhaps for some of the same reasons as Hearing people – to exult, celebrate, and praise God, life and living, creativity and culture; to sing the blues or discuss politics; or maybe to share a good time with family members and friends. Each Deaf (and Hearing) person “hears” Sweet Honey differently. While the vocal harmonies may not register, a poignant message can leave a memorable impression.

The challenge of interpreting the songs of Sweet Honey In The Rock is to accurately convey the message of the songs, reflect the mood and emotional intent of the singers, and render visually the melody, harmony, and rhythm of the music. I accepted the challenge of interpreting Sweet Honey In The Rock's message and music in 1980, after having interpreted professionally for seven years. Sweet Honey In The Rock had, in that year, made a commitment to making concerts accessible to the Deaf and to developing a Deaf audience. From the beginning, the group included the Sign Language Interpreter in her costuming and in the semi-circle in which she sits or stands to perform. This inclusion has been a clear statement to the Deaf audience that they are included in the conversation.

Each song is an expression of the self. Each has a story line and personality. For example, in “Breaths,” the tempo is slow, the attitude is spiritual, encouraging an open heart and mind. The first word is “Listen;” the first sign represents the concept of gaining one's attention. Interpretation may include information useful as a frame of reference. I indicate which singer is leading the song. Because all members of Sweet Honey in the Rock lead songs, the Deaf audience may not otherwise recognize who the leader is for a particular song. The signed interpretation of the song may also include relevant cultural and historical information, and broader identification and definition of concepts and vocabulary. In my use of American Sign Language, the interpretation of a song

is not an exact word-to-sign translation, but a full and vibrant visual depiction of the message.

Sweet Honey's repertoire includes songs in languages other than English. “Denko,” for example, is in the Bambara language of Mali, West Africa. I am not yet proficient in any of the African Sign Languages, so my interpretation focuses on an explanation of the song's origin and meaning with a spelling of some of the lyrics using American Sign Language.

Some songs, like “Fulani Chant,” have no words at all. Here, the interpreter is challenged to visually represent the sounds being made – a moan, a hum, a breath, a brisk wind, an ocean wave, a complex rhythm or a singer's a cappella characterization of a musical instrument. I imagine an abstract painting using color and shape to create a picture. Thus a movement or gesture with grace or force, a fluctuation of the hand, arm, or shoulder with patterns big and small may be used in combination with verbal descriptions to help visualize the sound. Each Sign Language Interpreter will have her or his own unique interpretive style. My style tends to be fluid, loosely scripted, not static. Vocabulary and movements may change from performance to performance as the lead singer may not sing a song the same way each time it is performed. As thoughts or concepts may be expressed using various word and musical choices, so, too, can American Sign Language use a selection of signs and/or phrases representing the same idea.

Determining that a signed interpretation of a song is “good” can be subjective as well as objective. One can assess the interpreter's comfort level, pacing, visual clarity, vibrancy of vocabulary, and visually poetic presentation. Effectiveness also can be measured by the Deaf audiences' ease in understanding the message of the song. As Sweet Honey In The Rock opens her mouth to sing, the Sign Language Interpreter moves her hands to sign. As the lyrics exclaim their message and as the melodies, harmonies, and rhythms are vocalized, they are paralleled by the poetry and power of the visual language of American Sign.

From Continuum: The Firest Songbook of Sweet Honey In The Rock, compiled and edited by Ysaye M. Barnwell with Sweet Honey In The Rock (Contemporary A Cappella Publishing, 1999).

Sweet Honey's Special Place in the Deaf Community

Sweet Honey is committed to connecting the hearing impaired community to its music. Sign language interpreter Shirley Childress Saxton rehearses and works as an equal member of the company. On this page, Wendy L. Armstrong, a hearing impaired African American, shares what the performance experience is like for her in poem and narrative form. (Note: Evelyn, in Stanza 5, is not a current active member of Sweet Honey.) Excerpted from *Still on the Journey*, Sweet Honey's book.

Thank You, Sweet Honey!

What is this feeling in my bones
It's Bernice's voice with beautiful song.
It penetrates my bones.
From my arms to my thighs a great warmth inside.

Ysaye's voice is very deep,
I can tell by the vibrations of my diaphragm

It shakes my stomach and rumbles my ribs,
Oh, my, it feels good.

Aisha, your voice I can feel in my head,
It massages my temples,
Like the waves on the ocean's bed.

Evelyn's voice I cannot hear or feel,
But the expressions on your face
Are more than enough,
Full of emotions,
Happiness,
Sorrow and pain,
Showing the depth and seriousness
Of whatever you are saying.

Nitanju, your body shows how the music flows,
And your voice is so small it tingles my toes.

The interpreter is a very important part of the group.
She helps me to understand the lyrics
And where they start and stop.
Her fingers and hands as swiftly as they flow
Take me everywhere Sweet Honey goes.

The whole group together moves my spirit and soul,
My heart starts to pound and tears fill my eyes.

The music "sounds" so good I hate to say goodbye.
So I'll continue to experience
Sweet Honey
And the healing sounds
That make my soul rock.

I am Wendy L. Armstrong. I am an African American. I was born and raised in Kansas. I came to Washington, DC, in 1984 to continue my education. I am a recent graduate of Gallaudet University's education program. [Gallaudet is America's only university for the hearing impaired.] I am also hearing-impaired. I started losing my hearing at the age of ten, and by the time I was in high school I was Deaf. I call myself hard-of-hearing because I can hear a few sounds in one ear.

Despite my hearing impairment, I have a deep love for the art of music. Before I lost my hearing I was a young musician and I wanted to be a conductor. I also wanted to sing and write my own music.

After I became hard-of-hearing I didn't want to go to concerts because I couldn't hear, feel, or understand the words. Imagine you are in a jar with the top on. When you look out you can see fine, mouths are moving, people are moving, but you can't hear anything. It's like you are in a silent movie.

A Sweet Honey In The Rock concert was the first concert I ever attended as a hearing-impaired person. Experiencing Sweet Honey is the most wonderful, uplifting, and exhausting experience I ever had. I can sit and look at the Sign language interpreter and understand the words. I can look at each singer to follow the beat and the flow of the music. Sometimes I can tell who is singing certain parts and sometimes I ask the interpreter. Sweet Honey has inspired me to ask other performers to make their concerts, plays, and lectures accessible for the hearing-impaired. By attending Sweet Honey concerts and events I have also learned so much about African American culture as well as African culture.

Living in a Deaf world, Black Deaf people are not exposed to the history and culture of our people. And as I attend Sweet Honey concerts today, I understand better some of today's issues, such as racism, women's issues, discrimination, etc. I can now recognize when these issues are affecting me and how I can help the Black Deaf community in dealing with them.

Thank you, Sweet Honey, for opening up a new world to me. Now I share this world with other Deaf people like myself.

a capella – An Italian phrase literally meaning “chapel style,” it refers to singing without a musical accompaniment. Pronounced “ah-kuh-PEH-luh.”

AABA form – A song pattern. Each letter represents a musical pattern. In AABA, the first pattern is played twice, then the second pattern once, then the first pattern again. This is a common song pattern in jazz.

American Sign Language (ASL) – A language developed for those who are hearing impaired or deaf, it uses hand signals and motions as a language to communicate letters, numbers, and ideas. Shirley Childress Saxton bases her signing on ASL, but it is not the only sign language available.

Arrangement – The orchestration of a musical work; i.e., choosing which instruments play at what time (or which singers sing when) and where improvisation can be.

Blues – A non-religious folk music that rose among African-Americans during the late 19th century and features several African influences: a call-and-response pattern, blue notes, and imitation of the human voice by musical instruments. Classic blues have a twelve-measure, three-line form, with the second line repeating the first.

Blues note – Any note that is bent or smeared, generally a half step away from the obvious note.

Blues scale – A musical scale based on the pentatonic (five-note) scale.

Call-and-Response – A musical “conversation” when players answer one another; exchanges between instrumentalists.

Chord – A combination of usually three or more notes sounded/played simultaneously or one after another.

Harmony – The relation of the notes in a musical piece, or the playing of two or more notes at the same time. The patterns formed by the notes create the key that the piece is in and, with rhythm, give it expressiveness and momentum.

Improvisation – Music played without written notation; an “instant composition” that is central to jazz.

Key – The principal scale of a piece, in which many or most of its notes are played.

Melody – A succession of notes that together form a complete musical statement; a tune.

Meter – The basic succession of beats in a musical piece, the framework against which the rhythm is played.

Pitch – A note or musical tone.

“Raising” – The word used to describe how a congregational-style song is sung.

Shekeres – African rattles made of dried gourds that have a series of shells knotted around the outside. When the gourd is shaken, the shells hit the gourd and make percussive noises. Shekeres come in all sizes, from hand-sized to larger than a basketball.

Soloist – A singer or instrumentalist performing a song or part of a song alone.

Sound check – A rehearsal before a performance when the singers practice with microphones while the sound engineer adjusts the volume and balance of the sound in the auditorium. A sound check lets musicians practice and hear what their voices sound like in that particular theater.

Spirituals – Religious songs composed by American slaves. Often, their words had double meanings: both a religious meaning and a hidden message about escaping from slavery.

Syncopation – The shifting of a regular musical beat to place emphasis on a normally unaccented beat. (For example, we normally say HAP-py BIRTH-day, but a syncopated way of saying it would be hap-PY birth-DAY.)

Texture – The instrumentation of a musical passage or the sound and qualities of an instrument or voice.

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Students at Go Like the Wind! Montessori School during a UMS classroom visit, November 2001.

LESSON PLANS

Introduction

The following lessons and activities offer suggestions intended to be used in preparation for the Youth Performance. Teachers may pick and choose from the cross-disciplinary activities and can coordinate with other subject area teachers. As students of all ages will be attending the performance, the lesson plans are meant as aids or guidelines. You may wish to use several activities, a single plan, or pursue a single activity in greater depth, depending on your subject area, the skill level or maturity of your students, and your intended learner outcomes.

Learner Outcomes

- Each student will develop a feeling of self-worth, pride in work, respect, appreciation and understanding of other people and cultures, and a desire for learning now and in the future in a multicultural, gender-fair, and ability-sensitive environment.
- Each student will develop appropriately to that individual's potential, skill in reading, writing, mathematics, speaking, listening, problem solving, and examining and utilizing information using multicultural, gender-fair and ability-sensitive materials.
- Each student will become literate through the acquisition and use of knowledge appropriate to that individual's potential, through a comprehensive, coordinated curriculum, including computer literacy in a multicultural, gender-fair, and ability-sensitive environment.

ARTS EDUCATION

- Standard 1: Performing All students will apply skills and knowledge to perform in the arts.
 Standard 2: Creating All students will apply skills and knowledge to create in the arts.
 Standard 3: Analyzing in Context All students will analyze, describe, and evaluate works of art.
 Standard 4: Arts in Context All students will understand, analyze, and describe the arts in their historical, social, and cultural contexts.
 Standard 5: Connecting to other Arts, other Disciplines, and Life All students will recognize, analyze, and describe connections among the arts; between the arts and other disciplines; between the arts and everyday life.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

- Standard 1: Meaning and Communication All students will read and comprehend general and technical material.
 Standard 3: Meaning and Communication All students will focus on meaning and communication as they listen, speak, view, read, and write in personal, social, occupational, and civic contexts.
 Standard 5: Literature All students will read and analyze a wide variety of classic and contemporary literature and other texts to seek information, ideas, enjoyment, and understanding of their individuality, our common heritage and common humanity, and the rich diversity of our society.
 Standard 6: Voice All students will learn to communicate information accurately and effectively and demonstrate their expressive abilities by creating oral, written, and visual texts that enlighten and engage an audience.
 Standard 7: Skills and Processes All students will demonstrate, analyze, and reflect upon the skills and processes used to communicate through listening, speaking, viewing, reading, and writing.
 Standard 8: Genre and Craft of Language All students will explore and use the characteristics of different kinds of texts, aesthetic elements, and mechanics – including text structure, figurative and descriptive language, spelling, punctuation, and grammar – to construct and convey meaning.
 Standard 9: Depth of Understanding All students will demonstrate understanding of the complexity of enduring issues and recurring problems by making connections and generating themes within and across texts.
 Standard 10: Ideas in Action All students will apply knowledge, ideas, and issues drawn from text to their lives and the lives of others.
 Standard 12: Critical Standards All students will develop and apply personal, shared, and academic criteria for the enjoyment, appreciation, and evaluation of their own and others' oral, written, and visual texts.

SOCIAL STUDIES

- Standard I-2: Comprehending the Past All students will understand narratives about major eras of American and world history by identifying the people involved, describing the setting, and sequencing the events.
 Standard I-3: Analyzing and Interpreting the Past All students will reconstruct the past by comparing interpretations written by others from a variety of perspectives and creating narratives from evidence.
 Standard I-4: Judging Decisions from the Past All students will evaluate key decisions made at critical turning points in history by assessing their implications and long-term consequences.
 Standard III-2: Ideals of American Democracy All students will explain the meaning and origin of the ideas, including the core democratic values expressed in the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and other foundational documents of the United States.
 Standard VI-1: Identifying and Analyzing Issues All students will state an issue clearly as a question of public policy, trace the origins of the issue, analyze various perspectives people bring to the issue, and evaluate possible ways to resolve the issue.
 Standard VI-2: Group Discussion All students will engage their peers in constructive conversation about matters of public concern by clarifying issues, considering opposing views, applying democratic values, anticipating consequences, and working toward making decisions.
 Standard VI-3: Persuasive Writing All students will compose coherent written essays that express a position on a public issue and justify the position with reasoned arguments.
 Standard VII-1: Responsible Personal Conduct All students will consider the effects of an individual's actions on other people, how one acts in accordance with the rule of law, and how one acts in a virtuous and ethically responsible way as a member of society.

MATH

Standard I-1: Patterns Students recognize similarities and generalize patterns, use patterns to create models and make predictions, describe the nature of patterns and relationships, and construct representations of mathematical relationships.

Standard I-2: Variability and Change Students describe the relationships among variables, predict what will happen to one variable as another variable is changed, analyze natural variation and sources of variability, and compare patterns of change.

SCIENCE

Standard I-1: Constructing New Scientific Knowledge All students will ask questions that help them learn about the world; design and conduct investigations using appropriate methodology and technology; learn from books and other sources of information; communicate their findings using appropriate technology; and reconstruct previously learned knowledge.

Standard IV-4: Waves and Vibrations All students will describe sounds and sound waves; explain shadows, color, and other light phenomena; measure and describe vibrations and waves; and explain how waves and vibrations transfer energy.

CAREER & EMPLOYABILITY

Standard 1: Applied Academic Skills All students will apply basic communication skills, apply scientific and social studies concepts, perform mathematical processes, and apply technology in work-related situations.

Standard 2: Career Planning All students will acquire, organize, interpret, and evaluate information from career awareness and exploration activities, career assessment, and work-based experiences to identify and to pursue their career goals.

Standard 3: Developing and Presenting Information All students will demonstrate the ability to combine ideas or information in new ways, make connections between seemingly unrelated ideas, and organize and present information in formats such as symbols, pictures, schematics, charts, and graphs.

Standard 4: Problem Solving All students will make decisions and solve problems by specifying goals identifying resources and constraints, generating alternatives, considering impacts, choosing appropriate alternatives, implementing plans of action, and evaluating results.

Standard 5: Personal Management All students will display personal qualities such as responsibility, self-management, self-confidence, ethical behavior, and respect for self and others.

Standard 7: Teamwork All students will work cooperatively with people of diverse backgrounds and abilities, identify with the group's goals and values, learn to exercise leadership, teach others new skills, serve clients or customers and contribute to a group process with ideas, suggestions, and efforts.

TECHNOLOGY

Standard 2: Using Information Technologies All students will use technologies to input, retrieve, organize, manipulate, evaluate, and communicate information.

WORLD LANGUAGES

Standard 8: Global Community All students will define and characterize the global community.

Standard 9: Diversity All students will identify diverse languages and cultures throughout the world.

HEALTH

Standard 5: Goal Setting and Decision-making All students will use goal setting and decision-making skills to enhance health.

Objective

For students to become familiar with the styles and members of Sweet Honey In The Rock by viewing Singing for Freedom, a video of a 1995 Sweet Honey children's concert.

Standards

Arts Education 1-5

Materials

Singing for Freedom: A Concert for the Child in Each of Us (Sweet Honey video provided with this study guide)

Activity

You may wish to explore the entire 45-minute video with your students or to select particular excerpts according to the age, interests, and areas of study of your students. Times reflect how far into the video each moment happens; actual times may vary depending on the VCR.

:45 "So Glad I'm Here," led by Nitanju Bolade Casel

- In this song, the singers introduce themselves.
- Think About It: On page 23 of this guide, Dr. Reagon writes about Sweet Honey concerts, "The opening song is usually gentle. In a conversation, it's better to say hello, no need to show off and try to find a showstopper in the first response." Does this opening song meet these criteria? How?
- Think About It: How is the audience involved in this performance? (They call out their names, sing along, stand, and clap.)

2:25 Brief interview with Bernice Johnson Reagon

- Dr. Reagon speaks about their work with children's concerts and recordings.

3:05 "Down in the Valley Two By Two," led by Bernice Johnson Reagon

- This song is particularly appealing to younger audience members.
- Dr. Reagon teaches the song to the audience, which creates its own harmony.
- This activity includes choosing partners (and changing midway through the song) in which one member mirrors the actions of another.
- Themes: Importance of individuality, diversity, and taking turns.
- Math Application: Copying the actions of the partner creates symmetry.
- Teaching Idea: Recreate this activity in your classroom, with children partnering and moving to the song on the video.

8:30 Kids Explain What Freedom Means To Them

- In this segment, several kids are brought up onstage to define freedom.
- At 9:15, a deaf student signs her answers.
- Watch for people raising their arms high in the air and wiggling their fingers. Many in the deaf and hearing-impaired community use this sign to show appreciation to the artists. (In the hearing community, people clap and applaud to show appreciation.)

11:40 "This Little Light of Mine," led by Bernice Johnson Reagon

- This is a spiritual, a religious song originally created by slaves on American plantations prior to the Civil War. The "little light" refers to a person displaying his/her faith.
- You will see Dr. Reagon (in blue) holding a large gourd. On the outside, shells are hung on strings, which are knotted to form a sort of netting. These types of instruments are commonly used by Sweet Honey In The Rock as percussion instruments. They are called shekeres, and the sound is created when the shells bump up against the gourd. Shekeres were originally created hundreds of years ago in Africa.

12:30 "We Shall Not Be Moved," led by Nitanju Bolade Casel

- This song was commonly sung during the American Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, in which people of all faiths, races, and backgrounds came together to demand equal rights, especially for African Americans.
- What is the mood of this song? (optimistic, hopeful) How can you tell? (upbeat, fast rhythms, clapping hands)

13:20 "I Ain't Scared Of Your Jails," led by Ysaye Maria Barnwell

- Another song of the American Civil Rights Movement.
- Traditionally, women's voices are divided into two categories: sopranos (high voices) and altos (low voices). But in female a capella (unaccompanied) singing, women with low voices, like Dr. Barnwell's, are called basses, a term usually used to describe men with low voices.
- This song segued (transitioned) from "We Shall Not Be Moved." How are the two songs similar? (both Civil Rights songs, both express strong feelings about people who won't back down.) How are they different? (mood, attitude, staccato singing style)

13:45 "We Shall Overcome," led by Carol Maillard

- One of the best-known Civil Rights Movement songs.
- Like the "Hallelujah Chorus" of Handel's Messiah, it is traditional for people to stand when this song is performed. In addition, it is traditional to take the hands of the people standing on either side of you.
- Notice how the singers cross their arms in front of their bodies before taking hands. Dr. Reagon explains that by doing so, you embrace yourself while reaching out for others.
- Social Studies Connection: During a hummed verse, Dr. Reagon speaks about racism: "Racism is like a disease that a nation can have ... It can really make a nation sick. During the Civil Rights Movement in this country, there were people who loved their country and who loved themselves that said, 'We have to do something about this. We don't want to live in a society that treats people wrongly because of who they are, what they look like. There's a wonderful freedom song, and the songs we just sang together were songs that people sang in mass meetings ... that were held all over the country but especially in the South ... people gathered to try to change their community. And when they would come together, they would sing.

The first time they knew this song was a special song was in 1960, when all of the sit-in leaders gathered in Orangeburg, South Carolina [the film credits point out that this is an error; the actual location was Shaw University, in Raleigh, North Carolina] and ... they started to sing this song, and everybody stood in the room like you're standing here. And then, without any instruction, people reached for each other ... they put their right hand, they crossed it over the left, and then, they had to move together. And it's a funny thing about doing this. You have to move together from the end of the rows toward the center. Because if you don't, the person in the center of the row will be destroyed."

21:27 "Young and Positive" rap, led by Nitanju Bolade Casel

- Listen for how this rap begins as a solo; in later verses, other members of the group add a non-melodic vocal soundscape in the background. Only at the end of the song do they join in with lyrics.
- The rap includes the lyrics, "My eyes are on the prize, and they will stay that way." The lyrics are a reference to the Civil Rights Movement song "Eyes on the Prize." The lyrics of "Eyes on the Prize" reminded Civil Rights workers to keep their "eyes on the prize" even though the fight for equality might be difficult.
- Activity: Encourage students to find an issue that is important to them and to write a poem, rap, or other rhythm-based work about it. As an example, see Nitanju Bolade Casel's rap "No Taxation Without Representation," about Washington, DC, on the website www.sweethoney.com.

27:20 "Juba," led by Bernice Johnson Reagon

- This song dates back to the era of American slavery and incorporates African-rooted rhythms.
- This song includes an opportunity for students to drum along with the song. Instructions are given by Dr. Reagon.
- Listen for slurring of notes sung by the rest of the group.

31:00 "Run Molly Run," led by Bernice Johnson Reagon

- Includes hand games with partners.
- Listen carefully for Dr. Barnwell's bass voice, which sometimes joins in the harmony and, at other times, provides an almost percussion-like beat.

34:00 Introduction of Singres, by Nitanju Bolade Casel

- Note that Shirley Childress Saxton, at the time this was filmed, went by Shirley Childress Johnson.
- Students familiar with American Sign Language should watch when Dr. Barnwell is introduced. What is she signing? She was Sweet Honey's original Sign Language interpreter but decided to devote herself exclusively to singing instead.

35:00 "I Got Shoes," led by Bernice Johnson Reagon

- "I Got Shoes" is also the title of one of Sweet Honey's award-winning children's albums.
- "I Got Shoes" is another example of a spiritual.
- Listen for the volume of this song. How does it, in combination with tempo, express the mood of this song?

40:00 "Freedom Now," led by Bernice Johnson Reagon

- Another opportunity for audience participation.
- Call-and-response: After the introduction, in which the audience is taught the chorus, Dr. Reagon leads the group in congregational-style singing, in which she offers up a phrase, and the audience responds. This is also referred to as call-and-response singing. Example:

Reagon: Do you want respect? (call)

Others: Oh, yeah. (response)

Reagon: Do you want respect? (call)

Others: Mm-hmm. (response)

Reagon: Will you give respect? (call)

Others: Oh, yeah. (response)

Each verse is followed by the chorus that was taught at the beginning. Notice how Reagon's lyrics change slightly for each verse, but the response stays the same.

44:30 Closing Credits

- If your students have little or no experience with live performances, the standing ovation at the end of this video are a good opportunity for them to see and discuss audience applause and etiquette (see "Coming to the Show" earlier in this guide).
- The credits also include information about the composers, lyricists, and arrangers of the concert's songs.

Objective

For students to become familiar with this song that was fundamental to the Civil Rights Movement by learning its melody, creating harmonies, and/or writing additional lyrics.

Standards

Arts Education 1, 2, 4; Language Arts 3, 5,6; Social Studies I-2, I-3

Materials

Copies of sheet music

Opening Discussion

"We Shall Overcome" was a song of unity that arose from the Civil Rights Movement. Using the "Viewing the Video" lesson, show students the video segment featuring "We Shall Overcome" and Bernice Johnson Reagon's explanation of the song's role and symbolism in the Civil Rights Movement. After viewing the video, discuss the song and the impact it had on students. Then proceed with one or a combination of the following activity options.

Activity Options

- Teach students to sing the melody line as written. (See first page of sheet music, which can also be downloaded from the Education portion of the UMS website: www.ums.org).
- Using the first page of sheet music, encourage students to create and/or notate their own harmony for the song.
- Using the first page of sheet music, explore the lyrics and how they relate to students' prior knowledge about the Civil Rights Movement and civil disobedience.
- Using the second page of sheet music, which has notes but no lyrics, encourage students to express their feelings about a current event by writing a new verse.
- Encourage students to perform their original lyrics for the class.

We Shall Overcome

We shall overcome. We shall overcome some day. Oh deep in my heart, I do believe we shall overcome some day.

2. We'll walk hand in hand
We'll walk hand in hand
We'll walk hand in hand some day.

Chorus:
Oh deep in my heart
I do believe
We shall overcome some day

3. We shall all be free
We shall all be free
We shall all be free some day

Chorus:

4. We are not afraid
We are not afraid
We are not afraid today

Chorus:

5. We are not alone
We are not alone
We are not alone today

Chorus:

6. The whole wide world around
The whole wide world around
The whole wide world around some day

Chorus:

7. We shall overcome
We shall overcome
We shall overcome some day

Chorus:

We Shall Overcome

Objective

For students to learn about the workings of an arts organization, increase Internet research skills, and become familiar with a wider variety of art forms and performers.

Standards

Arts Education 2: Creating; 3: Analyzing in Context; 5: Connecting to Life
 English Language Arts 2: Meaning/Communication; 4: Language; 6: Voice
 Social Studies II-1: People, Places, and Cultures; V-1: Information Processing
 Career & Employability 1 - 4; 6
 Technology 1 - 4

Materials

Internet Access

Opening Discussion

At arts organizations such as University Musical Society, a great deal of work is needed to put on a concert series. UMS has 8 departments, 38 staff members, and over 20 interns working together to help concerts go as well as possible!

Each year, the organization must decide what artists it will hire, when they will perform, and in what venue. It is very important to have a variety of art forms. For example, UMS offers dance, theater, jazz, orchestral, chamber music, and soloists throughout the season. It is also important to UMS to choose performers who will appeal to people from different backgrounds. For the 2002-2003 season, several shows are centered on Brazilian culture. UMS also tries to include concerts that showcase African American heritage, Asian art forms, and other cultures. In order to meet these goals, negotiations between UMS staff and the performers' representatives sometimes begin years in advance.

Activity

- After explaining briefly how an arts organization like UMS works, explain that the students will be designing a concert series of their own.
- Direct the students to UMS's website at www.ums.org. Let them explore and read about the different performances being presented this season. What shows are most interesting to them? Is there an art form or style they particularly like?
- Keeping in mind the concerns arts administrators have when planning a season, have them select concerts they would put on their own concert series. Feel free to include performers that may not be appearing at UMS this season. Why did they select those specific artists? How are the concerts linked? Is there a theme connecting them all (cultural, same art form, good variety)? (Consider limiting 5 shows to start.)
- Write a memo to Ken Fischer, president of University Musical Society, Tell him what shows you think should be presented and why you selected them. Mail the memos to the Youth Education Department, and we'll give them to Mr. Fischer ourselves!

Discussion/Follow-up

What did you learn from this experience? How was your list different from that of others? How did you justify your choices?

M E B U R S G Y K M G Q O E M O C R E V O L L A H S E W O N
 O S C N N Y P R N F S Z Y I X Y Q B L W Q F Y X C H P K R Q
 R F I I P I Z I T H Z J C K E E O V M A D V G N D K E E I X
 P B F S T W V A R W E H M D C D F O C E I G W D Q G D R F G
 K M G T D S X E L I I D E G G L S U C G P Y R M Y R H N M N
 X Q K Y B A U X R G T Z W E U F N D K A A H D A X O W L X W
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 I T B A O S L N L Q I Y A H N O R F N G U S L T O L K U G I
 D O C N W Y T Q A A Y T E L T Z S J N N I F B Z D M M L Y O
 C H O V K H M W J N I K Y G S Z D F E A T S G D B Q A P H I
 Y K S T E S U N J F E C N M G C I V I L R I G H T S A K C V
 N Q T A Z W B G O R B I O P U P P Z C N Q J F A P R R L X B
 D V T T S E U J E T H B C S O S A W V G W T B L U Z S Q C X
 Q E B K G E W S R S X C R T J Q I P U I K O W Y B L D N J L
 R G A T H T L T A U I S W F H L C C I S R K K G V R J X F I
 C Y U V F H D W T Y J N J A S J H G A M F O C G A Z R K G H
 A S K E G O D I A E C P A W F D D S G L K I F X F M W F P F
 F H Z W L N R Y L T K U E Z N H J S V E S Q O W W K R G L M
 K O S N E E R T W T Y N D H N M O R P Q D O Y Y F Q X A L R
 R F V I S Y F O H L A G G Y T W H E X V E Q C M L O V G G W
 Y A B B A I J U M T J D V Y Q A K N P G D R I I S Y S Z U C
 N F A J C N R G V I S L P H K B X E Q B G M S Y E G O M Z R
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 S N E S D R D V F R O R P W H X C F U V D W U G Y L L J N E
 C A L X J O A G N W M A A G C H C P L G T G T U V D E K M X
 A B L K V C G L X K N S H Z Z A Q M W N W R W X T O E O K Y
 H Q B K P K W C K V Y Y Q V A X T U I O F M L X I V J L W T
 C U N I L D N O G A E R T X X K F X B L T P C H L A N D E P

The words in the left column relate to the Sweet Honey Youth Performance and can be found in the word search above. Look in all directions!

- | | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Aisha | Aisha Kahlil is one of the group's members. |
| Barnwell | Ysaye Maria Barnwell is the bass voice of the group. She has the lowest voice. |
| Casel | Nitanju Bolade Casel sings with Sweet Honey. She is Aisha Kahlil's sister! |
| Civil Rights | During the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, many Americans prayed, marched, boycotted, and worked to get governments and people to treat all people equally, especially African-Americans. Songs were an important way of bringing people together. |
| Michigan Theater | The theater where Sweet Honey will perform. |
| Sign language | Shirley Childress Saxton performs the songs using American Sign Language. |
| Spirituals | Religious songs composed and sung by slaves that are still sung today. |
| Rap | A kind of popular music in which the performers chant in rhythm instead of sing. Rhyming is often important in rap. |
| Reagon | Bernice Johnson Reagon founded Sweet Honey In The Rock. |
| Shekeres | Dried gourds with shells on the outside that are used for percussion accompaniment |
| Social Justice | Fairness for everyone. Many Sweet Honey songs are about social justice. |
| Sweet Honey In The Rock | The group was named after a Bible verse. |
| University Musical Society | The people organizing and sponsoring the performance. |
| Washington DC | The home of Sweet Honey In The Rock |
| We Shall Overcome | One of the most famous songs of the Civil Rights Movement. Most people hold hands and sway gently when they hear this song. |


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- (Over,Down,Direction)
- AISHA(5,21,NW)
 - BARNWELL(3,21,S)
 - CASEL(5,22,N)
 - CIVIL RIGHTS(16,11,E)
 - MICHIGAN THEATER(15,1,SW)
 - RAP(26,12,NE)
 - REAGON(12,30,W)
 - SHEKERES(15,7,SW)
 - SIGN LANGUAGE(20,15,N)
 - SOCIAL JUSTICE(14,13,NW)
 - SPIRITUALS(6,1,SE)
 - SWEETHONEY IN THE ROCK(6,11,S)
 - UNIVERSITY MUSICAL SOCIETY(4,1,SE)
 - WASHINGTON DC(8,16,NE)
 - WE SHALL OVERCOME(28,1,W)

Make your own word searches and other puzzles online for free!
www.puzzlemaker.school.discovery.com

This is Bernice Johnson Reagon, who founded Sweet Honey in the Rock.

When Sweet Honey sings, they wear clothing designed especially for them.

Be a costume designer and color in Dr. Reagon's long robe.

Can you find these items hidden in Dr. Reagon's robe?

- A musical note
- A flower



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SweetHoneyInTheRock. Photo by Dwight Carter. Left to right: Aisha Kahlil (on stool); Nitanju Bolade Casel (on stool); Bernice Johnson Reagon (seated, with long scarf); Carol Maillard (standing); Shirley Childress Saxton (standing); Ysaye Maria Barnwell (seated on far right). Photo courtesy www.sweethoney.com.

RESOURCES

YOU ASKED FOR IT!

We've heard from teachers that it's helpful to have a paragraph or two describing a Youth Performance that they can include in a letter/permission slip to send home to parents.

Please adapt this information so it meets the requirements of your school or district.

Dear Parents and Guardians,

We will be taking a field trip to a University Musical Society (UMS) Youth Performance of Sweet Honey In The Rock on Tuesday, January 7, at (10am or noon) at the Michigan Theater in Ann Arbor. We will travel by (car/school bus/private bus/walking), leaving school at approximately _____am and returning at approximately _____pm.

The UMS Youth Performance Series brings the world's finest performers in music, dance, theater, opera, and world cultures to Ann Arbor. For over 25 years, the six African-American women of the vocal ensemble Sweet Honey In The Rock have travelled the world. Comprised of five singers and a sign-language interpreter, Sweet Honey sings spirituals, Civil Rights songs, rap, folk, and gospel. Their a capella (unaccompanied) voices create complex harmonies as they explore history's past and the power of humanity. We chose this Youth Performance because of its artistic diversity, its positive message, and its musical excellence. This performance also connects to our curriculum by _____.

We (need/don't need) additional chaperones for this event. Please (send/don't send) lunch along with your child on this day. If your child requires medication to be taken while we are on the trip, please contact us to make arrangements.

If you would like more information about this Youth Performance, please visit the Education section of www.ums.org. Copies of the Sweet Honey In The Rock Teacher Resource Guide are available for you to download.

(insert additional information as required by your school or district)

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to call me at _____ or email me at _____.

Sincerely,

-----Please detach and return by this date:_____-----

My child, _____, has my permission to attend the UMS Youth Performance of Sweet Honey In The Rock on Tuesday, January 7 at (10am/noon). I understand that transportation will be by _____.

(insert additional information as required by your school or district)

Signature_____ Date_____

Relationship to child _____

Daytime phone number_____

Emergency contact person_____

Emergency contact's phone number_____

Arts Resources

www.ums.org

The official website of UMS. Visit the Education section for study guides, information about community and family events, and more information about the UMS Youth Education Program.

www.artsedge.kennedy-center.org

The nation's most comprehensive website for arts education, including lesson plans, arts education news, grant information, etc.

Sweet Honey in the Rock

www.sweethoney.com

The official website of Sweet Honey in the Rock. Includes lyrics and song files, as well as biographical information.

www.soundzimpossible.com/shir/bio/members.swf

An opportunity to read the biographies of individual members of Sweet Honey. Includes a photograph of each woman as well as a brief audio greeting.

<http://www.media-culture.org.au/reviews/print.php?sid=462>

An online review of a Sweet Honey in the Rock concert.

The Individual Members of Sweet Honey in the Rock

<http://www.rykodisc.com/RykoInternal/Features/361/Bio.htm>

Biographies of each member.

<http://academic2.american.edu/~breagon/Index.htm>

Bernice Johnson Reagon's website at American University in Washington, DC, where she is Distinguished Professor of History.

<http://chnm.gmu.edu/rhr/intervi1.htm>

An interview from Radical History with Bernice Johnson Reagon that focuses primarily on her non-Sweet Honey endeavors, including her careers with the Smithsonian Institution and American University.

www.ymbarnwell.com

Dr. Ysaye Maria Barnwell's website.

American Sign Language

<http://where.com/scott.net/asl/abc.html>

An online guide to the ASL alphabet.

Although UMS previewed each website, we recommend that teachers check all websites before introducing them to students, as content may have changed since this guide was published.

Recommended Reading

Continuum: The First Songbook of Sweet Honey In The Rock

Compiled and Edited by Ysaye M. Barnwell with Sweet Honey In The Rock

We Who Believe in Freedom: Sweet Honey In The Rock ... Still on the Journey

By Bernice Johnson Reagon and Sweet Honey In The Rock
Introduction by Alice Walker

General Releases

Sweet Honey in the Rock (Flying Fish, 1976)

Includes "Sweet Honey In The Rock," "Traveling Shoes," "Jesus is My Only Friend"

The Other Side (Flying Fish, 1985)

Includes "Deportees" and "Gifts of Love"

Breaths (Flying Fish, 1988)

Includes "Ella's Song" and "Study War No More"

Feel Something Drawing Me On (Flying Fish, 1985)

Includes "Hush Li'l Baby" and "We'll Understand It Better By and By"

Live at Carnegie Hall (Flying Fish, 1988)

Includes "Letter to Dr. Martin Luther King," "Are My Hands Clean?" and "Wade in the Water"

In This Land (Earthbeat!, 1992)

Includes "Fulani Chant," "See See Rider," and "Guide Me Oh Thou Great Jehovah"

Still On The Journey (Earthbeat!, 1993)

Includes "No Mirrors in My Nana's House," "Wodaabe Nights," and "Soujourner's Battle Hymn"

Sacred Ground (Earthbeat!, 1996)

Includes "No More Auction Block," "Would You Harbor Me," and "Balm in Gilead"

Selections 1976-1988 (Rounder two-disc set, 1997)

Includes "Wade in the Water" and "More Than a Paycheck"

...Twenty Five ... (Rykodisc, 1998)

Includes "Motherless Chil"

Freedom Song (soundtrack from TNT movie, Sony, 2000)

Includes Civil Rights Movement songs like "Work Up This Morning With My Mind Stayed on Freedom," "Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around," and "Eyes on the Prize"

Especially for Children

All For Freedom (Music for Little People, 1989)

Includes "So Glad I'm Here," "Cumbayah," and "Down in the Valley, Two by Two"

I Got Shoes (Music for Little People, 1994)

Includes songs that count in Swahili, English, Japanese, French, and Spanish; the rap "Young and Positive," "Shoo Fly, Don't Bother Me," and "Little Daniel, Play On Your Harp"

Still The Same Me (Rounder, 2000)

Includes "We Shall Not Be Moved," several improvisations, and the African chant "Tuwe, Tuwe"

University Musical Society

University of Michigan
Burton Memorial Tower
881 N. University
Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1011
734-615-0122
umsyouth@umich.edu
www.ums.org

Ann Arbor School for the Performing Arts

4090 Geddes Road
Ann Arbor, MI 48103
734-995-4625
<http://community.mlive.com/cc/arts>

ArtServe Michigan

17515 West Nine Mile Road, Suite 250
Southfield, MI 48075
248-557-8288 x 16
www.artservemichigan.org

Arts League of Michigan

1528 Woodward Avenue, Suite 600
Detroit, MI 48226
313-964-1670

Univ. of Michigan Center for Afroamerican and African Studies

200 W. Hall
Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1092
734-764-0594

Univ. of Michigan School of Music

1100 Baits Dr.
Ann Arbor, MI 48109-2085
734-764-0583

Wayne State University Music Department

4841 Cass Avenue, Suite 1321
Detroit, MI 48202
(313) 577-1795
music@wayne.edu

Sweet Honey In The Rock
 with Toshi Reagon and Big Lovely
 Friday, January 10, 8pm
 Michigan Theater, Ann Arbor

The six women of the a capella group Sweet Honey In The Rock return for their fifth UMS concert, this time joined by Bernice Johnson Reagon's daughter, Toshi, and her band, Big Lovely. Toshi Reagon is a powerhouse who mixes her musical loves - rock, soul, funk, blues, and folk - and delivers them with humor and intelligence through her dynamic voice and fierce guitar playing.

The Boston Globe wrote, "The dynamic Toshi Reagon and Big Lovely ... nearly blew the roof off with her funk-driven sound rich with lyrics about kindness, compassion, and peace and love."

The program features a new work co-commissioned by UMS and the University of Michigan.

Sign language interpreted.

Ticket prices range from \$16 to \$38.

For tickets, call the UMS Box Office at 734-764-2538 or visit www.ums.org.



Media sponsors WEMU 89.1 FM and WDET 101.9 FM.

September
 30 4:30pm UMS Performing Arts Workshop: The Steps and Rhythms of Urban Tap - WISD

October
 10&11 11 am Tamango's Urban Tap: Full Cycle - Youth Performance, P
 16 8pm Abbey Theatre of Ireland: Euripides' Medea - First Acts Series, P
 30 8pm Orquestra de São Paulo - First Acts Series, MT

November
 6 11am Herbie Hancock Quartet - Youth Performance, MT
 17 4pm Gidon Kremer, Sabine Meyer and Oleg Maisenberg - First Acts Series, R
 19 8pm Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France - First Acts Series, OH
 21 8pm Bolshoi Ballet: Swan Lake - First Acts Series, DOH

December
 8 6pm Boston Pops Esplanade Orchestra Holiday Concert - First Acts Series, C

January
 7 10am, noon Sweet Honey in the Rock - Youth Performance, MT
 9 4:30pm UMS Performing Arts Workshop: Brazilian Music in the Classroom - WISD - date change!
 13 4:30pm Kennedy Center Workshop: Harlem - WISD
 31 11am Voices of Brazil - Youth Performance, MT

February
 3 4:30pm UMS Performing Arts Workshop: Kodo: An Introduction to Japanese Drumming - WISD
 9 4pm Ying Quartet - First Acts Series, R
 13 noon Sphinx Competition 2003 Honors Concert - Youth Performance, P

March
 3 4:30pm Royal Shakespeare Company Teacher Workshop - WISD
 6 8pm Stuttgart Chamber Orchestra - First Acts Series, MT
 25 11am Kodo - Youth Performance, K-12, P
 30 4pm Muzsikás - First Acts Series, R
 31 4:30pm Kennedy Center Workshop:
 Living Pictures: A Theatrical Technique for Learning Across the Curriculum - WISD

April
 3 4:30pm Kennedy Center Workshop:
 Living Pictures: A Theatrical Technique for Learning Across the Curriculum - WISD
 9 7:30pm J.S. Bach's St. Matthew Passion - First Acts Series, St. Francis of Assisi Church, Ann Arbor.

CA = Crisler Arena, Athletic Campus, Ann Arbor
 P = Power Center, 121 Fletcher, Ann Arbor
 MT = Michigan Theater, 603 E. Liberty, Ann Arbor
 SF = St. Francis of Assisi, Stadium at St. Francis, Ann Arbor
 WISD = Washtenaw Intermed. School District, 18195. Wagner, Ann Arbor
 PE = Pittsfield Elementary, 2453 Pittsfield Blvd, Ann Arbor
 OH = Orchestra Hall, 3711 Woodward, Detroit
 DOH = Detroit Opera House, 1526 Broadway, Detroit
 R = Rackham Auditorium, 915 E. Washington, Ann Arbor

For more information, please call 734.615.0122 or e-mail umsyouth@umich.edu