

Educational Notes:

INDIGENOUS ARTISTS WHOSE MUSIC IS FEATURED IN RUMBLE THE CONCERT

Introduction

American Indian musicians have been active in contemporary music for nearly a century. Many Native artists have had successful and influential careers in almost every form of popular music— from jazz and blues to folk, country, and rock. Some assumed the role of supporting performer, band member, or session player. Others were drawn to the limelight, and are recognized for their accomplishments in mainstream music, yet not necessarily for their American Indian heritage. Together they forged new sounds, worked with some of the greatest names in music history, and inspired both Native and non-Native performers who continue to build on their legacy.

Charley Patton – Foundation of the Blues

During the era of swing and jazz, there was a genre of music played in rural and regional venues that had not yet reached mainstream popularity—the blues. The blues is thought to have developed from a combination of African and Native music traditions. Many historians have traced elements of blues music, such as its shuffling beat, to Native drum rhythms and the call-and-response style of singing.

Charley Patton (Choctaw/African American, 1887?–1934) was a seminal influence on the careers of Robert Johnson, Muddy Waters, and Howlin' Wolf. He raucously played the 1920s delta roadhouse and juke joint scenes, banging on his guitar, swinging it around wildly, and even playing it behind his back. His energetic performances influenced the theatrical style of famous rock and rollers such as Jimi Hendrix.

Patton died at the early age of forty-three, and with only three recordings, he is considered the “Father of the Delta Blues.”

Mildred Bailey – First Lady in Big Band and Jazz

Mildred Bailey (Coeur d'Alene, 1907–1951) has been praised as the first non-African American jazz singer to successfully adapt the rhythms and improvisational flavors of Dixieland and ragtime into swing jazz. Her mother, Josephine, played an integral role in her training in both mainstream and traditional Native music. However, during the golden age of radio in the 1930s and '40s, being known as Indian was not an option.

Bailey began her career as a cinema pianist in Spokane, Washington. In 1929 she was handpicked by bandleader Paul Whiteman to sing for his orchestra in Los Angeles. Best known for her memorable hit “Rockin’ Chair,” Mildred “The Rockin’ Chair Lady” Bailey was a household name by the mid-1930s. Along the way she helped her brother Al and their high school friend Bing Crosby get a foothold in the music scene. Bailey later became a bandleader, working with almost every big name in the swing era, and even hosted her own radio show—the hallmark of celebrity for bandleaders during the '30s and '40s.

- Hosted *The Mildred Bailey Variety Show* in the late 1940s.
- Co-hosted the 1930s radio show *The Camel Caravan* with Benny Goodman.
- One of the first women to perform as lead vocalist for big bands such as the Paul Whiteman Orchestra and the Red Norvo Orchestra.
- Hoagy Carmichael wrote the jazz standard “Rockin’ Chair” for her.

Link Wray – Birth of the Power Chord

Link Wray’s (Shawnee, 1929–2005) song “Rumble” climbed the sales charts to #16 in 1958. The dark, sinister quality of the tune was very different from other instrumentals heard on the airwaves, such as those by Dick Dale or Duane Eddy. Listeners could not envision the shadowy, mysterious persona sending such a grinding, distorted sound through their radios, which threatened to explode from the reverberation.

The enigmatic Wray originated a raw guitar sound shaped by volume, distortion, and simple song structures that became a hallmark of rock and roll. He is almost universally credited with inventing the “power chord,” without which hard rock could not exist. He was also able to create distortion, echo, and wah-wah—staples of today’s guitar sound—without the aid of technology. Wray inspired such major rock figures as The Who’s Pete Townshend and Led Zeppelin’s Jimmy Page to explore the soundscapes that have made them rock-and-roll guitar legends.

- “Rumble” was chosen for the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame’s list “500 Songs That Shaped Rock and Roll.”
- “Raw-Hide,” #23, Billboard® chart, 1959
- “Rumble” appears in the 1994 Quentin Tarantino film *Pulp Fiction*.

Robbie Robertson – Storyteller of the Shadowland

Robbie Robertson (Mohawk, b. 1943) was already an accomplished songwriter and guitarist when Bob Dylan hired him and his friends to be his backup band for an upcoming tour. After Dylan went solo, Robertson and company adopted the name The Band—a moniker they were given during their time with Dylan. They went on to become a commercially successful roots-music vehicle, groundbreaking in the world of Americana for their eclectic instrumentation, purity of sound, and pop refrains sung in a unique, angelic tonality.

The power of Robertson’s lyricism painted images of American settings, history, and the minor dramas of life as poignantly as a Rockwell painting for the Beat Generation—an interesting accomplishment for a Canadian-born man of Native descent. His journey from Toronto to the Six Nations Reserve—where he first

heard the blues and learned his first chords—and finally to the folk and roots scene around Woodstock, New York, became the basis of his music for the next thirty-five years.

- Performed with Bob Dylan during his famous 1966 world tour, when he went from playing acoustic to electric.
- Rock and Roll Hall of Fame inductee with The Band, 1994
- Grammy nominations, *Robbie Robertson*, 1987, and *Storyville*, 1991
- Grammy Award, Producer of the Year, *Contact from the Underworld of Redboy*, 2005
- Presented the Lifetime Achievement Award in 1997 from the Academy of Songwriters.
- The Band was given a star-studded farewell by such artists as Eric Clapton, Bob Dylan, Joni Mitchell, and Neil Young in the 1978 film *The Last Waltz*. Robertson co-produced the film with director Martin Scorsese.

Buffy Sainte-Marie – A Universal Soldier

Buffy Sainte-Marie (Cree, b. 1941 or 1942) is one of the greatest folk singers of the '60s. She developed her unique folk style in college cafes and later as a member of the Greenwich Village circle that included Peter La Farge and Bob Dylan. Her commemorative ballads of Native history and its hard truths carried on in La Farge's tradition, and her social commentary during the Vietnam War era with songs such as "Universal Soldier" earned her attention as a notable voice of conscience.

Sainte-Marie's reputation for edgy, socially provocative material was paralleled by her success as a writer of unforgettable love songs recorded by established performers such as Elvis Presley, Roberta Flack, and Celine Dion. She has lent her unmistakable voice to film and television roles, and influenced a variety of contemporary artists, from the folksy Indigo Girls to alternative rockers Sonic Youth.

- 1982 Academy Award winner for Best Song “Up Where We Belong”
- “Until It’s Time for You to Go,” written by Sainte-Marie, has been recorded by Elvis Presley, Cher, and Barbra Streisand, among many others.
- Three Billboard Hot 100® hits in 1972.

Jesse Ed Davis – Guitarist to the Greats

Jesse Ed Davis (Kiowa/Comanche, 1944–1988) grew up in a family of musicians in Norman, Oklahoma, where he was very conscious of the racial boundaries that made him feel “a little weird being Indian,” especially when it came to pursuing rock and roll. He first hit the road as Conway Twitty’s guitarist, but he later became the lead guitarist for Taj Mahal, who brought authentic, bluesy rock to a more mainstream audience.

Over the next fifteen years, Davis became one of the most sought- after session players for some of the biggest names in pop music, including Ringo Starr, Jackson Browne, Rod Stewart, Keith Moon, Helen Reddy, Eric Clapton, and George Harrison. His closest collaborator though, both personally and professionally, was John Lennon, with whom Davis played on four projects between 1974 and 1984, including the Lennon/Elton John number-one hit “Whatever Gets You through the Night.”

“It was my pleasure and privilege to play with Jesse Ed Davis. He was a really fine musician. Peace and love.” —Ringo Starr

- Performed with George Harrison at the Concert for Bangladesh.

- Guitarist, "Whatever Gets You through the Night," John Lennon and Elton John, #1, Billboard® chart, 1975
- Guitarist, "Doctor, My Eyes," Jackson Browne, Billboard Top 10® single, 1972
- Guitarist, "Tonight's the Night," Rod Stewart, 1976
- Guitarist on Eric Clapton's album *No Reason to Cry*, 1976.
- Guitarist on George Harrison's album *Extra Texture*, 1976.
- Guitarist on Neil Diamond's album *Beautiful Noise*, 1976.