

teacher resource guide

**schooltime
performance
series**



ben williams
i am a man

**arts
education
njpac**



about the performance

GRAMMY®-winning bassist Ben Williams performs a compelling fusion of jazz, soul, R&B and hip hop with his captivating live band. Williams' celebrated album *I AM A MAN* takes its title from the sign held by sanitation workers during their historic Memphis strike in 1968, just before Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination.

Released in 2020 by Rainbow Blonde, *I AM A MAN*, boasts a humid and hazy sound that recalls Soulquarian albums released by The Roots, Erykah Badu, Bilal, D'Angelo, Common and Roy Hargrove's *RH Factor*. Williams said about his latest album: "I wanted to make this not just a musical statement, but sonically, I wanted to dig into a different sound. We had the opportunity to work

in the studio to craft some sounds. What you hear is Brian [Bender]'s brilliance with engineering. I wanted this record to deal with the past, present and future."

Ben Williams has become one of modern jazz's most celebrated bassists of the past decade. He's reached #1 on iTunes and National Billboards charts and was named the 2011 iTunes Jazz Breakthrough Artist of the Year. Williams served as composer and bandleader on his first two albums: *State of Art* (2011, Concord Records) and *Coming of Age* (2015, Concord Records).

njpac on the mic podcast

with Ben Williams



Scan the QR code to access the NJPAC on the Mic Podcast & show notes

How to listen to this episode of NJPAC On the Mic
Scan the QR code or visit njpac.org/arts-education/teacher-resources to access the podcast and the following show notes:

Part 1: About | Pre-show audio, 5 minutes

Includes: An introduction to the performance, artists, venue and welcome message

Welcome message voiced by Ben Williams

Part 2: Connect | Post-show audio, 8 minutes

Includes: Reflection question, a look at the Memphis Sanitation Workers' Strike & the phrase *I AM A MAN*

Opening question voiced by Ben Williams

Part 3: Spotlight | Post-show audio, 10 minutes

Includes: An interview with bassist and composer Ben Williams, discussion starters

Interview guest: Ben Williams

Additional Episode Credits

Series producers: Michael Aquino and Dania Ramos

Written and hosted by Dania Ramos

Original music from: *I AM A MAN* by Ben Williams

Theme and outro music:
NJPAC Hip Hop Arts & Culture program

Additional music from Epidemic Sound

Sound editing, sound design and voiceover by Michael Aquino

About NJPAC On the Mic

NJPAC On the Mic invites your students to expand their experience of attending a SchoolTime Performances show. We provide three podcast episodes for each production, suitably aligned with New Jersey Student Learning Standards (NJSLs) and New Jersey Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Competencies. With *NJPAC on the Mic*, the learning begins before — and continues beyond — your visit to the New Jersey Performing Arts Center!

inspired ideas in the classroom

Teacher Focus

Student Activity

NJ Student Learning Standards

P

Prepare for the performance

Have students listen to *NJPAC On the Mic: About*.
 Introduce Ben Williams's performance by having students view the videos: [I AM A MAN Album Preview](#), [Memphis Sanitation Strike](#)
 Discuss the image of the sign stating "I AM A MAN" and establish a parallel between Williams's album preview video and the Memphis Sanitation Strike documentary. Elaborate on the historical context and most important aspects of the Memphis Sanitation Strike of 1968, emphasizing its intersection with the Civil Rights Movement.
 Have students read [Ben Williams's biography](#). Highlight his closing quote about the *I AM A MAN* album, "I wanted this record to deal with the past, present and future."

Listen to *NJPAC On the Mic: About*. Watch the [I AM A MAN Album Preview](#) and a short documentary about the [Memphis Sanitation Strike](#). Participate in a discussion about the recurring sign imagery found in the videos.
 Read [Ben Williams's biography](#) for additional background information on the artist and the *I AM A MAN* album.

English Language Arts
 NJLSA.R7.
 NJLSA.SL1.
Social Studies
 6.3.8.CivicsHR.1
Visual & Performing Arts
 Anchor Standard 7, 8, 11

E

Experience the performance

Based on what they've learned about Ben Williams's album and the Memphis Sanitation Strike, ask students what they think the message or theme of the performance will be.
 Revisit Williams's quote about his album *I AM A MAN*: "I wanted this record to deal with the past, present and future."
 Encourage students to think of this quote as well as the connections between William's songs and the Memphis Sanitation Strike as they experience the performance.
 Review audience etiquette expectations with students, perhaps including what-if scenarios to reinforce comprehension.

Based on what you've learned about Ben Williams's album *I AM A MAN* and the Memphis Sanitation Strike, what do you think the message or theme of the performance will be?
 Consider the following while you experience the performance:
 1. Ben Williams's quote: "I wanted this record to deal with the past, present and future."
 2. Connections between the songs on Williams's album and the historical aspects of the Memphis Sanitation Strike
 You are about to be an audience member, a role that comes with great responsibility!
 Memorize the expectations set forth by your teacher and enact them during your time at the theater.

NJ Social-Emotional Learning
 Relationship Skills Sub Competency 1
Visual & Performing Arts
 Anchor Standard 8

R

Reflect, respond and read

Reflect: Have students listen to *NJPAC On the Mic: Connect*.
 Twice during this episode, pause the audio to allow students to share their responses to the questions:
 1. What was your favorite moment from the performance?
 2. The phrase "I am a man" has evolved to serve different social causes. How would you adapt the phrase to fit a cause you believe in?
Read: Display the following quote from Ben Williams and lead a discussion that forges a deeper, more relevant connection between the Memphis Sanitation Strike and Williams's album:
 "The record is ultimately about identity: *I AM A MAN* is about a group of men telling the world who they are, because the world they live in is constantly trying to tell them who they are. The right to express ourselves, to tell the world who and what they are — that's a right that everybody should have, and that's what unites us all."
 – Ben Williams (The Review interview)
 Have students study all or a portion of [Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s speech "I've Been to the Mountaintop."](#)
Respond: Facilitate a class discussion using the guiding questions in the student section. Students can learn more about Ben Williams by listening to an interview in *NJPAC On the Mic: Spotlight*.

Reflect: Listen to *NJPAC On the Mic: Connect* and share your responses to the questions:
 1. What was your favorite moment from the performance?
 2. The phrase "I am a man" has evolved to serve different social causes. How would you adapt the phrase to fit a cause you believe in?
Read: Read the Ben Williams quote shared by your teacher. How does this deepen the album's connection to the strike?
 Read [Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s speech "I've Been to the Mountaintop."](#) Pay close attention to the speech's mood and tone.
Respond: Consider the following questions in response to both readings:
 1. What are the themes in Williams's quote and Dr. King's speech?
 2. Are there certain words or phrases that are especially impactful?
 3. Do you notice similarities between the missions of both men?
 Learn more about Ben Williams by listening to an interview in *NJPAC On the Mic: Spotlight*.

English Language Arts
 NJLSA.SL1.
 NJLSA.R2.
 NJLSA.R9.
NJ Social-Emotional Learning
 Competency 11, 16
Visual & Performing Arts
 Anchor Standard 8, 11

F

Focus

As a class or independently, have the students read the following articles: ["The Inspiring Force of 'We Shall Overcome'"](#) and ["We Shall Overcome: The Power of Protest Songs"](#). Highlight that "We Shall Overcome" is included on the *I AM A MAN* album.
 Facilitate a class discussion using the guiding questions in the following student section.
 Distribute [Activity Sheet 1](#) and instruct students to analyze the "We Shall Overcome" lyrics by thoughtfully answering the provided questions. Ask students also to choose an additional protest song and analyze those lyrics.
 Note: Some songs may have lyrics that are inappropriate for specific classrooms. Please review songs ahead of time.

As instructed by your teacher, read the articles ["The Inspiring Force of 'We Shall Overcome'"](#) and ["We Shall Overcome: The Power of Protest Songs"](#).
 Participate in a class discussion by responding to the following questions:
 1. What are the characteristics of protest songs?
 2. What is their overall intention?
 3. Do you think there will ever be a time when protest songs are no longer created?
 Complete [Activity Sheet 1](#) by analyzing the lyrics of "We Shall Overcome" and an additional protest song of your choice.

English Language Arts
 NJLSA.SL1.
NJ Social-Emotional Learning
 Competency 11, 16
Visual & Performing Arts
 Anchor Standard 8, 11

O

Originate

Reiterate the status of "We Shall Overcome" as a highly recognizable protest song.
 Distribute [Activity Sheet 2](#). Alone or in small groups, have students select an existing song and create new lyrics in the style of a protest song, completing a minimum of a verse and a chorus. Encourage students to choose well-known, popular songs so listeners are familiar with the music and can focus instead on the new lyrics.

We've learned that an effective protest song speaks to a movement or cause. Use [Activity Sheet 2](#) to choose a well-known popular song and write new lyrics in the style of a protest song. Be sure to decide on a movement or cause you feel strongly about before creating lyrics.

English Language Arts
 NJLSA.W.9-10.4.
Visual & Performing Arts
 Anchor Standard 1, 2, 10

R

Rehearse

Review aspects of, and expectations for, constructive criticism among peers with the students.
 In groups or as individuals, have students exchange lyrics with their classmates and then analyze them using the same criteria from [Activity Sheet 1](#) (overall message, words/phrases, social movement/issue). If time allows, have students practice performing or reciting their new lyrics for one another.

Examine the protest song lyrics of one or more of your classmates. Offer feedback considering the overall message of the lyrics, meaningful or impactful words or phrases, and if the lyrics point to a specific social movement/issue. Approach your peer critique with empathy and a spirit of improvement.

English Language Arts
 NJLSA.R7.
 NJLSA.SL1.
NJ Social-Emotional Learning
 Competency 16
Visual & Performing Arts
 Anchor Standard 3

M

Make magic

Have the students perform or recite their new lyrics for the class. If they're uncomfortable sharing their lyrics orally, display their lyrics while an instrumental version of the song is playing or have a classmate perform or recite the words for them.

It's your time to shine! Perform or recite your new lyrics for the class, knowing that you are achieving the same goal as so many people before you - sending a message about an important cause and representing a positive change in our world. Well done!

NJ Social-Emotional Learning
 Competency 11
Visual & Performing Arts
 Anchor Standard 6

curriculum standards

NJ Visual & Performing Arts Standards

- 1: Generating and conceptualizing ideas.
- 2: Organizing and developing ideas.
- 3: Refining and completing work.
- 6: Conveying meaning through art.
- 7: Perceiving and analyzing products.
- 8: Interpreting intent and meaning.
- 10: Synthesizing and relating knowledge and personal experiences to create products.
- 11: Relating artistic ideas and works within societal, cultural, and historical contexts to deepen understanding.

common core state standards

English Language Arts

NJLSA.R2.

Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

NJLSA.R7.

Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

NJLSA.R9.

Analyze and reflect on how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

NJLSA.SL1.

Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

NJLSA.W.9-10.4.

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

FIND THE STANDARDS

For more detailed information on the standards, visit these websites:

NATIONAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS

corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy

NATIONAL SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARDS

socialstudies.org/standards

NATIONAL CORE ARTS ANCHOR STANDARDS

nationalartsstandards.org

NJ Social-Emotional Learning

Relationship Skills Sub Competency 1

Recognize one's feelings and thoughts.

Competency 11

Demonstrate an awareness of the expectations for social interactions in a variety of settings

Competency 16

Utilize positive communication and social skills to interact effectively with others.

Social Studies

6.3.8.CivicsHR.1

Construct an argument as to the source of human rights and how they are best protected.



vocabulary

Activist

A person who campaigns to bring about political or social change

Assassination

A murder by sudden or secret attack, often for political reasons

Civil Rights Movement

A struggle for justice and equality for African Americans that reached its height in the 1950s and 1960s

“I am a man”

A statement shown on signs during the Memphis Sanitation Strike of 1968. This phrase was the inspiration for Ben Williams's album of the same name

“I’ve Been to the Mountaintop” speech

Martin Luther King Jr’s speech in response to the Memphis Sanitation Strike of 1968. King gave this speech at the Mason Temple in Memphis, Tennessee, the day before he was assassinated

Memphis Sanitation Strike of 1968

A movement begun by Black sanitation workers to demand better working conditions and higher pay. The strike was endorsed by the Civil Rights Movement

Protest song

A song associated with a movement for protest and social change



resources

NJPAC

About NJPAC
njpac.org/about

NJPAC's Arts Education programs
njpac.org/arts-education

NJPAC Resources | *Ben Williams: I AM A MAN*
njpac.org/education-program/ben-williams-resources

Website

Ben Williams
benwilliamsofficial.com

Ben Williams's biography
benwilliamsofficial.com/bio

History.com | The 1968 Sanitation Workers' Strike
history.com/news/sanitation-workers-strike-memphis

Martin Luther King, Jr.'s speech:
"I've Been to the Mountaintop"
americanrhetoric.com/speeches/mlkivebeentothemountaintop.htm

National Civil Rights Museum | I AM A MAN:
Memphis Sanitation Strike 1968:
civilrightsmuseum.org/i-am-a-man

Declaration of Civil Rights
and Workers' Rights: I Am a Man!
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/I_Am_a_Man!

NPR | "The Inspiring Force Of 'We Shall Overcome'"
npr.org/2013/08/28/216482943/the-inspiring-force-of-we-shall-overcome

"We Shall Overcome: The Power Of Protest Songs"
udiscovermusic.com/in-depth-features/power-of-protest-songs

Ben Williams – *I AM A MAN* Interview
thereviewmag.co.uk/ben-williams-i-am-a-man

Memphis Sanitation Workers' Strike
kinginstitute.stanford.edu/memphis-sanitation-workers-strike

We Shall Overcome: The Story Behind the Song
kennedy-center.org/education/resources-for-educators/classroom-resources/media-and-interactives/media/music/story-behind-the-song/the-story-behind-the-song/we-shall-overcome

Tracing the Long Journey of "We Shall Overcome"
blogs.loc.gov/folklife/2014/02/tracing-the-long-journey-of-we-shall-overcome

Videos

Ben Williams's YouTube channel
youtube.com/channel/UCYSKqHupF1dBfd0WAgdvy3g

Ben Williams, NPR Tiny Desk Concert
youtube.com/watch?v=rsMLQVRS3ho

I AM A MAN Album Preview
youtube.com/watch?v=CzPkS6A1n14

Memphis Sanitation Strike Documentary
youtube.com/watch?v=Q2m6ESaEMeO

Ben Williams: We Shall Overcome
youtube.com/watch?v=bbGgSvTKWZU

Discussing "We Shall Overcome"
teachrock.org/video/pete-seeger-discussing-we-shall-overcome

Music

100 Great Protest Songs
open.spotify.com/playlist/093jqFsLlvRrYT8QPxyZ5?si=YvkDRhyRHuFS1ey0GRySQ

Modern Protest Songs:
29 Powerful and Controversial Anthems
freedomforum.org/modern-protest-songs/

Best Protest Songs In History: 20 Timeless Political Anthems
udiscovermusic.com/stories/best-protest-songs-history/

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Creative Lead, On-Site Programs

NJPAC Arts Education performances team:

Rosa Hyde, Treasure Borde, and Kendall Lipham. On the Mic is an NJPAC Arts Education production, produced in partnership with CM Studios. CM Studios producers: Michael Aquino and Dania Ramos. NJPAC and CM Studios are located in Essex County, New Jersey, situated on the traditional territory of the Leni Lenape people.

the arts in your school

In-School Residencies: NJPAC teaching artists come right to your school to teach the performing arts to your students. Our super-flexible in-person residencies are designed to meet your needs and you'll have a dedicated program manager to help you every step of the way. It's the perfect program to keep your students creating, connecting and expressing themselves through the magic of the arts.

Professional Development: Calling all educators! Expand your teaching skills, deepen your curriculum and give yourself a creative boost in NJPAC's forward-thinking professional development workshops. Our virtual PD programs are for teachers all the way from pre-K to high school and include hip hop, dance, storytelling, theater, music and more. Not only will you learn something... you'll also have fun and be inspired.

For more information or to schedule an appointment, please email our education sales team at artseducation@njpac.org. Or visit njpac.org/education

study the arts at njpac

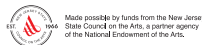
Saturday Programs: NJPAC's Saturday programs are geared towards students at every level — from those who dream of starring on Broadway to those who are still learning their scales. Students work with professional artists to build technique and develop their own creative style in hip hop, jazz, theater, musical theater and symphonic band.

Summer Programs: Want to begin to explore the arts? Or immerse yourself in the study of one genre? Then join us at NJPAC next summer in one of seven programs that spark the creativity in every child through the study of music, dance and theater.

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Turrell Fund



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+ deceased