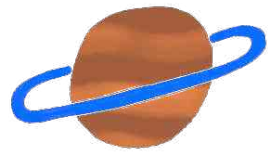


PIERCE FREELON PRESENTS



BLACK ^{TO} THE FUTURE

LEARNING GUIDE

Concert title

Pierce Freelon presents: BLACK TO THE FUTURE

Marketing paragraph

Sing, dance and travel through time with Pierce Freelon and four generations of his cosmic family.

Grammy®-nominated producer and accomplished musician PIERCE FREELON brings his inventiveness and creativity to the stage. Following his critically acclaimed debut children's album *D.a.D.* in 2020, Pierce's Grammy®-nominated 2021 *Black to the Future* (ages 5+) features elements of Afrofuturism, Black history, and archival voices to touch on imagination, family, self-care and science fiction. *Black to the Future* features voices from four generations of Pierce's family and beloved community, including his mother, jazz singer and six-time Grammy Award® nominee NNENNA FREELON, the late poet and Civil Rights activist MAYA ANGELOU, as well as Pierce's young daughter STELLA FREELON.

At this concert, you'll

- hear stories, Hip Hop, jazz, soul and poetry
- be invited to dance, sing-along and imagine adventures across space and time
- learn about concepts such as consent, gratitude and the specialness of being you
- learn how to count from one to ten in KiSwahili
- explore emotions, feelings and ancestors through music

Education standards alignments

National Core Arts Standards:

- MU:Re.7
- MU:Cn11

Common Core Standards:

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.2
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.5

CASEL: Core Competencies (Social-Emotional Learning):

- Responsible Decision Making (Reflecting on one's role to promote personal, family, and community well-being.
- Self-Awareness (Integrating personal and social identities; Identifying personal, cultural, and linguistic assets; Identifying one's emotions; Having a growth mindset and learning to set boundaries for yourself and respect the boundaries of others).





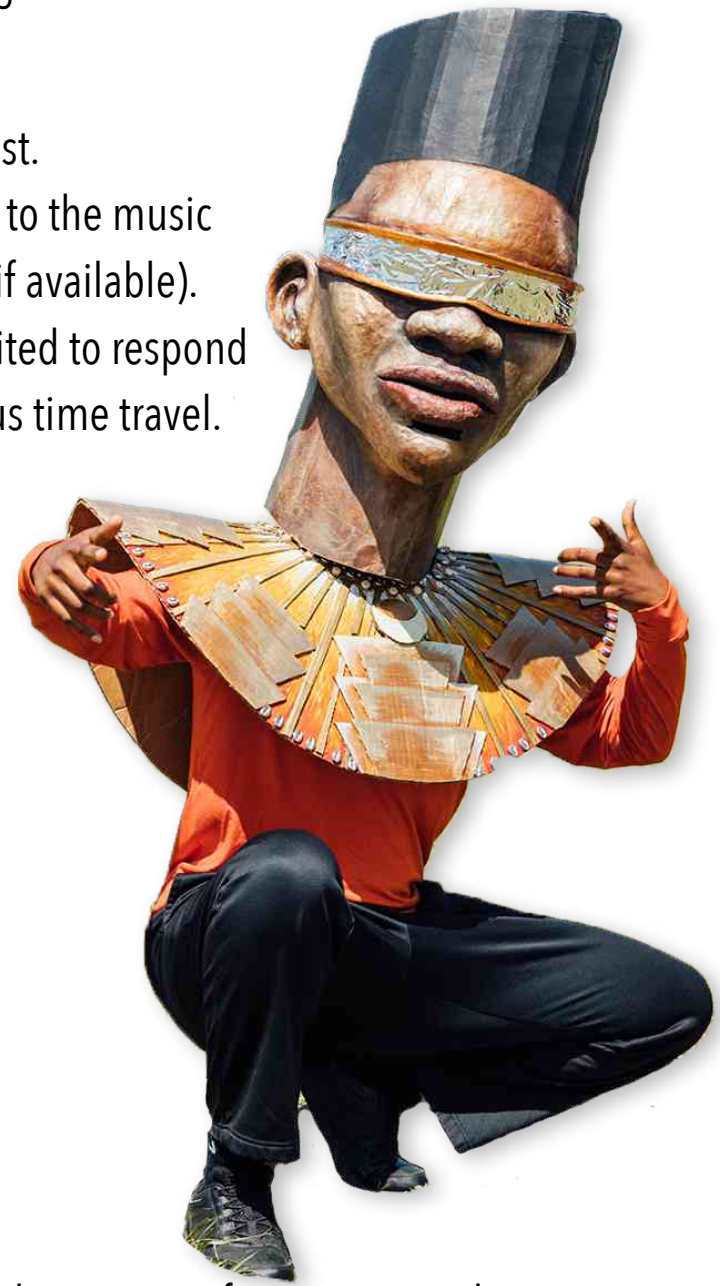
What to expect

This 45-minute concert features musician Pierce Freelon and his band members playing bass, synth, drum, and guitar. The musicians are accompanied by FALCON X – a larger-than life character who appears throughout the show to help Pierce and the audience travel through time (Falcon X is played by a dancer, wearing a giant Afrofuturistic puppet mask). There will also be videos with animations, archival images and sound effects.

- During the songs, the performers switch between singing and speaking.
- Sometimes the music is soft and slow, and sometimes the music is loud and fast.
- During the performance, projections and/or animations and videos are synced to the music on screen (during live performances they will be shown on a projector screen, if available).
- There will be opportunities for participation, where audience members are invited to respond to questions, engage in call-and-response, and use their spirit fingers to help us time travel.

Look and listen for

- Music can reflect different emotions. Are there songs that are energetic or reflective? What about songs that might comfort you if you're feeling lonely, or that encourage you to be brave? What emotions do you feel when listening? How could making or listening to music be helpful when you're feeling a strong emotion?
- Some of Pierce Freelon's music is inspired by his ancestors – members of his family or community who have passed away. Listen for moments when Pierce talks about his ancestors. How does he use music to remember them and the things they taught him? Do you have ancestors in your family or community that you think about?
- Pierce Freelon and his band use different styles of music, including Hip Hop and jazz. Listen for moments when people switch from singing words to speaking them. How do the styles work together?
- Pierce Freelon likes to use his imagination to travel into the past, or leap forward into the future. Listen for lyrics and sounds that might make you feel like you're exploring a different time or place. Where would you like to explore through sound and music?



Think about

Many songs use "hooks," or parts of a song that are meant to get your attention. Hooks are often repeated over and over, and are easy and fun to remember. For example, in "Braid My Hair" the hook is "Daddy will you braid my hair?" At the end of the concert, what parts of the song can you remember? Can you sing them? What do you think makes them memorable?

Sometimes words from poems and songs can be helpful to remember when you have a problem or a strong feeling. For example, in the song "My Body," the lyric "my body is mine" may be helpful to remind yourself or others that your body belongs to you, and no one else. Are there any lyrics from the concert that might be helpful for you to remember in the future? What is a situation in which the lyrics of a song might help you make a good choice or feel better?



About the artist

Pierce Freelon is a Grammy®-nominated musician, producer, educator, and former City Council Member from Durham, North Carolina, who has been featured on the Today Show and at NPR and MSNBC. Pierce has traveled the world teaching Hip Hop and music production to youth as co-creator of Beat Making Lab, an Emmy Award®-winning PBS web-series. He has taught in the Department of Music and the Department of African, African American, and Diaspora Studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; and is the writer, composer, and co-director of the animated series *The History of White People in America*, an official selection of the Tribeca Film Festival. Pierce is also the founder of Blackspace, a digital maker space where he mentors youth and teaches digital storytelling in Durham. His critically acclaimed children's music has been featured in *Billboard*, *Rolling Stone*, *Now This*, *Parents Magazine*, and more. Freelon has released two children's picture books with Little, Brown Books for Young Readers: *Daddy-Daughter Day* (2022) and *Daddy & Me, Side by Side* (2023). He is the son of famed Grammy®-nominated jazz vocalist Nnenna Freelon and the late preeminent architect of the National Museum of African American History and Culture, Phil Freelon. Pierce lives in Durham with his wife and their two young children.



About the art form

Pierce Freelon is a Grammy®-nominated children's artist whose music uses elements of Hip Hop, jazz, R&B, and more. Freelon's music also uses Afrofuturism, which explores people of African descent imagining themselves in the future through culture, technology, art, and more. People whose ancestors came from Africa live all over the world now, living incredibly different lives, but sharing some aspects of history and culture. When times are hard or sad things are happening, Afrofuturism can be a way to imagine a future full of exciting adventures and possibilities.

Try it yourself

- Imagine yourself in the future where new and exciting things are possible. Maybe you are in space or maybe you have new technology that will let you do interesting things. Where would you like to go in your imagination? What would you be able to do? How would you feel when you were there? How would you help your friends in this new adventure?
- Make up a short poem or story about what you imagined and share it with a friend. Then, think about what kind of music would go with your imagined place and story and your writing. Would it be fast or slow? Soft or loud? Happy, sad, spooky, or full of action? See if you can sing some of your words in a way that makes the story more exciting. Or see if you can find some sounds that would help to tell the story.



Additional resources

See some of Pierce's music videos here:

LeVar Burton: [<https://youtu.be/34V7rEQ6Gmc>]

Cootie Shot: [<https://youtu.be/xe9F8KReGtg>]

My Body: [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jynk237emxA>]

Braid My Hair: [<https://youtu.be/b9ryETaY8WA>]



Learn more about the album, *Black to the Future*, here: [<https://youtu.be/FiALoQ866co>]

Pierce Freelon in the media

NPR: [<https://www.npr.org/2020/08/01/896920635/pierce-freelon-on-his-childrens-album-and-the-legacy-of-his-creative-black-famil>]

Today Show: [<https://www.today.com/video/pierce-freelon-performs-with-daughter-on-children-s-hip-hop-album-91266117697>]

MSBNC: [<https://www.msnbc.com/politicsnation/watch/children-s-music-artist-pierce-freelon-celebrates-father-s-day-115153989637>]



Related resources

LeVar Burton interview (one of Pierce's biggest inspirations and subject of the song titled "LeVar Burton"): [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FroxjjqcHtA>]

Phil Freelon interview (Pierce's father and the architect of the National Museum of African American History and Culture. A portrait of Phil Freelon sits on a shrine behind the stage): [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i_paLvHNY-s]

Maya Angelou reading "Still I Rise" (Pierce's Auntie whose voice is heard during the show): [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qviM_GnJbOM]

A conversation about consent for kids (exploring topics covered in the song "My Body"): [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h3nhM9UIJjc>]

