



# FROM RAG TO RAP

*Art Form:* Music

*Style:* Popular

*Culture:* American

## *Technical Needs*

- Electrical Outlet

## *Meet the Artist*

Since 1977, RALPH WILDER has been the leader of his own full-time orchestra, the RALPH WILDER ORCHESTRA. They perform at a variety of functions including weddings, dinner dances, Bar Mitzvahs and corporate parties. The Ralph Wilder Orchestra is a well-known, highly established band with an excellent reputation and established personnel. They pride themselves on their wide musical variety, professionalism, and musicianship. Members of the band have extensive teaching experience at various grade levels and all have worked in music education.

## *About the Performance*

From Rag to Rap is a bright and entertaining journey through the world of popular music beginning in the early 1900's and ending with the present. The ensemble's instrumentation consists of clarinet/tenor saxophone, keyboards, vocals, and drums. The presentation begins with Scott Joplin's ragtime, traces through the dance music of the teens and 1920s, the big bands of the 1930s and '40s, the beginning of rock and roll in the 1950s, rock and Motown of the 1960s, popular hits from the '70s, '80s, and '90s, and ends with examples of rap and hip-hop of today. Some of the great artists featured include W.C. Handy, George M. Cohan, Irving Berlin, George Gershwin, Benny Goodman, Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Bill Haley, Elvis Presley, Chubby Checker, Grapevine, Cool & the Gang, Michael Jackson, M.C. Hammer, Beyonce Knowles, Outcast and Usher.

The program combines musical selections with narration and audience participation, creating a high-level of interaction and fun while teaching an understanding and appreciation of the many styles of popular music throughout

the 20th century and into the 21st. The highlight of the performances takes place when volunteers (both students and teachers) are encouraged to come on stage and 'rap' with the band.

## *Contextual Information*

There are many people who have influenced the development of popular American music. For example, pioneers like Scott Joplin, George M. Cohan, George Gershwin, Elvis Presley and Michael Jackson have had a profound impact on how music has developed over the years. Their influence transcends generations of artists and traces of their work can be seen in most of our contemporary music today.

In addition to the contributions of great artists of the past, social and economic changes influenced popular music in the 20th century. With the invention and accessibility of radio, television, record players, compact discs, and even MTV, music has become an integral part of everyday American life.

Some of the artists who will be featured include:

**George M. Cohan** is best known for his patriotic songs, "I'm a Yankee Doodle Dandy" and "Over There." He also wrote "Give My Regards to Broadway."

**Elvis Presley** was by far one of the most popular entertainers of the rock era. He led the teenage rebellion of the 1950s with his racy dance moves, gyrating hips, and loud, fast songs like, "Hound Dog," "Jailhouse Rock," and "Blue Suede Shoes."

**Michael Jackson** got his start as part of his brothers' career and became one of the biggest stars of the '80s. He was one of the first artists to explore the music video scene, using that medium to enhance his recordings. His videos for "Beat It" and "Thriller" showcased his talent for dancing as well as singing.

## *Vocabulary*

**Accompany:** The musical background provided for a principal part; for example, the piano who accompanies the singer

**Beat:** A strongly marked rhythm of popular music

**Composition:** The process of creating musical works; also, refers to a piece of musical work

**Dynamics:** Degrees of volume, loud to soft

**Form:** The way sound is organized in an orderly fashion

**Improvisation:** The art of performing music spontaneously, without written music

**Instrumental:** Music performed on instruments as opposed to music performed with voice

**Jazz:** An original American music of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that combines elements of the blues, spirituals of the black experience, African rhythms, European scales and harmony, early brass bands of New Orleans and creativity on the part of many great musicians; jazz has been called America's gift to the world

**Music:** Organized sound

**Mood:** Influences a piece of music by the key (major or minor key); it gives the musical piece a happy or sad sound

**Popular music:** Music composed and performed for entertainment; it is a form that people can sing or dance to and it is easy to remember

**Ragtime:** A bouncy style of music that was popular in the early 1900s

**Rap music:** A form of music in which the lyrics are of primary importance; it's known for its strong rhymes, rhythmic lyrics, the beat, and message

**Rock music:** A form of popular music with a strong, regular beat; it evolved from rhythm and blues, and jazz music

**Rhythm:** The feeling of movement in music

**Song:** A short composition usually accompanied, and written in a fairly simple style

**Melody:** A succession of musical tones that creates a musical shape; every musical tone has two qualities: duration and pitch

**Swing:** Big band music popular in 1930s and '40s; all swing music is notated or written down

**Tempo:** Rate of speed at which music is played