



DONNA GUNN MUSIC ON THE TRAIL

2014—2015 PERFORMANCE GUIDE FOR TEACHERS
LIED CENTER FOR PERFORMING ARTS | ARTS ACROSS NEBRASKA

The Arts Across Nebraska program connects Lied artists to Nebraska communities throughout the state. The program provides up to three tours every year, which are offered to presenting partners and communities in the state at a very affordable rate. The Lied Center is responsible for contracting with the artist/s, routing, and providing technical assistance on tour. The artist/s usually provide a public performance, and/or student matinee or workshop in each community.

*ABOUT “MUSIC ON THE TRAIL”

The soundtrack of the Western Expansion has rolled through auditoriums and workshops audiences of all ages with Donna Gunn’s “Music on the Trail” performances. A Powerpoint accompanies Gunn’s commentary, sharing images from the past and facts about the America’s move West and the African American slaves’ journey to freedom. Gunn interweaves classical music with the canvas of “the covered wagon way of life.” Through an interactive performance, Gunn invites students and adults alike to sing along to the songs of the Oregon Trail as well as listen to different composers’ interpretations of these folk songs on the piano. Gunn’s talents as a pianist shine as she plays these compositions for the audience members, sharing what aspects of the songs were taken into consideration during composition.

“Music on the Trail” shares the importance of music in the lives of pioneers, explorers, and revolutionaries as people moved about the country during the Westward Expansion and the Underground Railroad. Music offered inspiration and comfort for those making their way through the country to a better life. Gunn’s “Music on the Trail” blends history with music to encompass much of the American tradition that stemmed from many cultures to become unique to this country.



ABOUT DONNA GUNN*



Nebraska native Donna Gunn holds a strong passion for music and education. With a Master Degree in Piano Performance and Pedagogy from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Gunn focuses on performance, research and pedagogy, or the art of teaching. Having been a performing artist for more than 25 years, Gunn plays in a variety of venues, from formal recitals, such as on the Lied Center for Performing Arts main stage, to small stages for community outreach projects. Her work has taken her to Cornell University, the Netherlands, and Italy, which, along with her Nebraska heritage, she uses as inspiration for her pieces. Throughout her long career, she has refined her craft, developing interdisciplinary educational performances that draw material from over 400 years of musical history. Her work “reflects her resolute belief that everyone deserves equal access to music performance and education.”

In her educational work, she customizes instructive programs for both private and public settings and works for the “Touring Artist” program for the Mid-America Arts Alliance and for the “Touring Artist” and “Artists in Schools and Communities” programs for the Nebraska Arts Council. She has applied what she has learned in pedagogical studies to her instruction with K-12 students, college undergraduate and graduate piano pedagogy students, and adult learners through seminars, piano academies, workshops, and festivals. Gunn also leads a number of residencies that she custom designs to interconnect music, multimedia, and experiential activities. She invites students to sing, create, compose, dance, perform, and listen to develop a holistic understanding of music and its place in the world. Gunn’s residencies include: “Music on the Trail,” which is featured in the 2014/2015 Lied Center Arts Across Nebraska program, “It Was the Age of Revolution,” which explores music’s role in cultural change, and “Modernity – Music for Our Time,” which uses traditional music techniques to create music to match the new time. Gunn will cater the residencies for the community hosting the residency. Her residencies “capture attention, ignite enthusiasm, and inspire creativity” by connecting music, multi-media, and experiential hands-on activities. This method aims to create a complete understanding of music by putting it in context with other arts and showcasing its importance in the world.

Gunn’s performance is filled with the rich stories of the American West and expeditions throughout the country that hold an important role in the United States’ history. To help students prepare for the performance, it may be beneficial to give them a brief background on these influential times in history.

Westward Expansion On May 22, 1843, a group of 1,000 settlers began their journey West from Independence, Missouri. This “Great Emigration” went across Wyoming, through the Rocky Mountains near the basin of the Colorado River, through Idaho, and over the Blue Mountains to Oregon over the course of five months. Pioneered by fur traders, the trail began with flat traveling, with rivers posing to be one of the biggest obstacles. Disease and injury also became serious problems for the settlers on their way to Oregon along with the rugged mountains as they progressed on the trail. The majority of people who traveled along the Oregon Trail survived the trip, however. These pioneers from Independence decided to make the 2,000-mile journey after a smaller group of settlers had successfully made the trip in 1881. The Great Emigration spurred the mass of people to move West, with both large and small groups of pioneers making the trip annually. In 1845, nearly 3,000 people embarked on the trail together, and people continued to travel along it heavily until 1884.



People made the great migration West in search of economic success through owning farmland, which they thought would lead to more freedom. John O’Sullivan, a journalist in 1845, labeled this search for liberty from coast to coast as “manifest destiny.” With the search for freedom, the question of whether slavery would be allowed in the new Western states became the focal point of many debates. When Illinois Senator Stephen A. Douglas met backlash from the Southern states for wanting to create the states of Kansas and Nebraska, Northerners and Southerners engaged in a civil war in Kansas, later known as “Bleeding Kansas.” The national civil war began about ten years later.



The Underground Railroad Along with sharing the influence of the trail out West on music, Gunn also brings in the influences of the slaves’ movement up North. She discusses the “trail,” known as the Underground Railroad, which escaped slaves took to freedom. While not actually a railroad, this path helped these people move from their enslavement to 14 Northern states and Canada, where they were welcomed. Safe stops became “stations,” aids became “conductors,” and escapees became “packages” or “freight.” Using railroad terms as a code, people created a series of safe stopping places for escaping slaves to stay on their journey. Most of these stops occurred in the free territory, after the slaves had gone through the challenges of getting out of the South. Many assisted in being conductors of the Underground Railroad, including free black citizens of the North, philanthropists and church leaders, and Northern abolitionists. Harriet Tubman earned the title of “most famous conductor,” helping more than three hundred slaves escape during 19 return trips to the South.

THE COMPOSERS

Much of Gunn’s performance focuses on the composers who took the music of these journeys and made classical piano pieces from them. Brief biographies of the composers are below to help with both preparatory and follow-up purposes for the performance.

Roy Harris Roy Harris spent most of his childhood on farms in Oklahoma and southern California. Born in a log cabin on February 12, 1898, what would have been Abraham Lincoln’s 89th birthday, Harris lived a simple life with his parents who struggled financially. His mother introduced him to the piano and clarinet as a boy, with no formal teacher other than herself. By the time he began writing music, he was basically self-taught, despite his time at the University of California, Berkeley. Harris did, however, eventually gain valuable training with Arthur Bliss and Arthur Farwell. After selling his family farmland and driving for a dairy farm to make ends meet, Harris developed connections with some composers in the East. These connections landed him in Paris, working with Nadia Boulanger in a master class.



John Carter Unlike the other composers featured in Gunn's performance, John Carter is still living and working in the music world. For the last 35 years, Carter and his wife Mary Kay Beall have been writing hundreds of musical pieces together. Before venturing on this career with his wife, Carter had written more than 200 works himself. He is known for his choral compositions as well as his works for piano, organ, bell choirs, opera, and musical theatre. Not only have he and his wife written these pieces, but they have also had experience directing choirs of all ages. Their works have been commissioned and performed in many settings. He and his wife also perform as soloists, directors, and Sacred Choral Editors of church music. Currently, Carter acts as Director of Music at the University Baptist Church in Columbus, Ohio, as Editor Emeritus at Hope Publishing, and as a member of ASCAP (American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers) and the American Choral Directors Association.

Samuel Smith Most noted for writing "My Country, Tis of Thee," Samuel Smith also spent his adult life as a journalist, minister, and author. Smith adapted Ludwig van Beethoven's "God Save the Queen" to create the song he titled "America," later known as "My Country, Tis of Thee." After giving the lyrics of his song to Lowell Mason, Smith could have heard it performed publically for the first time on July 4, 1831. Smith graduated from Andover Theological in 1834 and became an editor of the Baptist Missionary Magazine in Boston. From there, he moved to Maine and became ordained as a Baptist minister and earned a professor position at Waterville College. He continued both his work as an editor and as a minister after moving to Newton, Massachusetts where edited the Christian Review and the Baptist Missionary Union and acted as pastor of the First Baptist Church. He married Mary White Smith and had six children and one foster son. He continued writing throughout his life, creating more than 150 hymns besides "My Country, Tis of Thee."



Nathaniel Dett Born Robert Nathaniel Dett, this composer spent his childhood in Ontario, Canada. He began formally learning the piano at age five, and after moving to the United States, he studied at the Oliver Willis Halstead Conservatory of Music. From there, he moved onto the Oberlin Conservatory of Music, becoming the first African American student to complete the five-year course. His five years at Oberlin introduced him to the idea of using spirituals in classical piano compositions. After graduating with a Bachelor of Music degree, Dett earned a professor position at Tennessee's Lance College, and eventually at the Lincoln Institute. While a professor, Dett composed practical pieces that his students could perform, one of which was In the Bottoms, which is featured in Gunn's performance. He is also credited with founding the Hampton Choral Union, Musical Arts Society, Hampton Institute Choir, and School of Music. Dett never forgot the importance of education, and he continued to study throughout his life.



To ensure that students receive a truly arts integrated learning experience, it may help to continue using the arts or provide a number of follow up activities after attending Donna Gunn's "Music on the Trail" performance. Gunn's focus on the Oregon Trail fits seamlessly with the Nebraska elementary school focus on pioneer life. The Kennedy Center for Performing Arts offers a number of interdisciplinary lessons that may be helpful following the performance. The Kennedy Center has many lesson ideas that incorporate arts and core subject standards at <http://www.artsedge.org>. Within these lessons, many opportunities exist to promote literacy with your students. Below are a few examples of such lessons:



Pioneer America: Journey West

Follow the half million people who headed west in the pioneer days of the 19th Century

This lesson from the Kennedy Center invites students to explore the daily life of the American pioneers and why these people chose to move west. The lesson provides a snapshot of what the pioneers endured on their travels and asks students to put themselves in the pioneers' shoes. By the end of the lesson, students create a map of the Oregon Trail and present their findings from research in an oral presentation to the class. Finally, they write a monologue with the perspective of one of the people traveling to a new life. This lesson ties together theater, history and geography. To view this entire lesson, visit [here](#).

Pioneer America: Pioneer Living

What was life like for the pioneers?

This Kennedy Center lesson is very similar to the previous lesson in that it allows students to dive into the life of a pioneer. Students research one specific aspect of pioneer life after reading Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Little House on the Prairie*. After they have done their research, students write a letter to a friend to share at least four facts they learned. The lesson provides a theatrical culminating activity. Students will create a tableau, or a frozen scene, that depicts one of the aspects of pioneer living they have researched. This lesson incorporates theater, history and literature. To view this entire lesson, visit [here](#)¹.



Pioneer America: Legendary Westerners

Can one person really make a difference?

Gunn's performance mentions many composers who are legendary for taking the songs of the trail and creating classical pieces from them. This lesson from the Kennedy Center teaches students about the legendary individuals during the Westward expansion. In pairs, students research a westerner who made his/her mark on history. Then, the students create a television interview and script with their historical person, which they perform for the class. An essay also accompanies this lesson in which students write about four other western pioneers, describing their specific role in U.S. history. This lesson ties together theater, history and language arts. To view this entire lesson, visit [here](#)².



Harriet Tubman: Secret Messages Shared through Song

Sing along with Philadelphia 4th graders and slaves journeying on the Underground Railroad through their spiritual music

Gunn also mentions the "trail" taken by slaves trying to find freedom in the North. This lesson from the Kennedy Center introduces students to the African American spiritual used by Harriet Tubman and other conductors used along the Underground Railroad to convey secret messages. This spiritual played an integral part in helping escaped slaves find safety. Students study this spiritual and then create their own that conveys a specific message. This lesson incorporates music and geography, much as Gunn's performance does. To view this entire lesson, visit [here](#)³.

Other Suggestions

If you are teaching younger grades, such as 3rd or 4th grades, it may be useful to consider exploring some of the Dear America books. Written in the form of a diary from young girls living through historic events in the United States, these books offer a chance for students to gain more literacy through reading literature told by a narrator their own age. Some of the books to consider specifically for Gunn's performance include: *A Picture of Freedom* by Patricia C. McKissack, which follows the story of a young slave who has learned to read and write and the dangers that went with literacy, and *Across the Wide and Lonesome Prairie* by Kristiana Gregory, which follows a young girl's journey along the Oregon Trail. By reading these texts and pairing them with culminating activities that promote the arts, you can increase literacy

and creativity skills in your students. You can also tie these activities with your social studies lessons to create an interdisciplinary experience for your students that will help them comprehend more of both subjects. To view more Dear America books, visit [here](#)⁴.

In further attempts to promote literacy, incorporating further writing activities helps students improve their writing and communication skills. Having students journal about their experiences both with the performance and any extensions to the performance helps them synthesize their knowledge. By exploring various forms of writing, students will apply their new knowledge and experiences in a way that makes them more effective and entertaining communicators as they continue in their education.

NEBRASKA'S FINE ARTS AND CONTENT STANDARDS

The majority of standards listed below must be adapted to appropriate grade levels. This is not a complete list of applicable standards, but instead provides a set, or examples, of relevant standards for teachers to develop lessons in line with Nebraska's educational standards and requirements. The Fine Arts and CORE subject standards can be found at the Nebraska Department of Education's website at www.education.ne.gov.

CORE SUBJECT OR CONTENT STANDARDS

The Nebraska Standards can be found on the Nebraska Department of Education website – <http://www.education.ne.gov/>.

SOCIAL STUDIES

GEOGRAPHY: THE WORLD IN SPATIAL TERMS

SS 5.3.1: Students will explore where (spatial) and why people, places, and environments are organized in the United States

SS 5.3.1.c: Analyze why things are located where they are in the United States

GEOGRAPHY: PLACES AND REGIONS

SS 8.3.2: Students will examine how regions form and change over time

SS 8.3.2.c: Analyze change in places and regions over time

GEOGRAPHY: HUMAN SYSTEMS

SS 3.3.4: Students will compare and contrast the characteristics of culture locally

SS 3.3.4.b: Compare and contrast the spread and diffusion of cultural traits (e.g., spread of ideas, languages, religions, people, goods, customs, traditions)

SS 5.3.4: Students will compare, contrast, and draw conclusions about the characteristics of culture and migration in the United States

SS 5.3.4.c: Compare and contrast historical and present day migrations to and within the United States

HISTORY: CHRONOLOGICAL THINKING

SS 4.4.1: Students will examine chronological relationships and patterns, and describe the connections among them

SS 4.4.1.d: Examine the chronology of historical events in Nebraska and their impact on the past, present and future

HISTORY: HISTORICAL COMPREHENSION

SS 2.4.2: Students will describe the development of people, events, ideas, and symbols over time

SS 2.4.2.a: Describe historical people, events, ideas, and symbols, including various cultures and ethnic groups

HISTORY: MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES

SS 4.4.3: Students will describe and explain multiple perspectives of historical events

SS 4.4.3.b: Compare and contrast primary and secondary sources to better understand multiple perspectives of the same event (e.g., The Homestead Act, Oregon Trail Diaries, military journal of Ponca Removal)

LANGUAGE ARTS

The following Language Arts Standards can be achieved mostly through reflection and follow-up activities.

Kindergarten Writing

Students will learn and apply writing skills and strategies to communicate

LA 0.2.2 WRITING MODES

Student will write in multiple modes for a variety of purposes and audiences across disciplines.

0.2.2.a: Communicate information and ideas effectively in analytic, descriptive, informative, narrative, poetic, persuasive, and reflective modes to multiple audiences using a variety of media and formats.

0.2.2.e: With adult guidance, compare mentor texts and examples to create similar pieces.

Grade 3 Speaking and Listening

Students will learn and apply speaking and listening skills and strategies to communicate

LA 3.1.6 COMPREHENSION

Students will construct meaning by using prior knowledge and text information while reading grade-level literary and informational text.

3.1.6.i: Construct and/or answer literal and inferential questions and support answers with specific evidence from the text or additional sources.

3.1.6.p: Make connections between the text of a story, drama, or poem and a visual or oral presentation of the text.

3.3.2 LISTENING

Students will develop and demonstrate active listening skills across a variety of situations

LA 3.3.2.a: Demonstrate active and attentive listening skills (e.g., eye contact, nonverbal cues, recalling, questioning) for multiple situations and modalities.

LA 3.3.3.d: Listen, ask clarifying questions, summarize, and respond to information being communicated and consider its contribution to a topic, text, or issue under study.

*NEBRASKA FINE ARTS STANDARDS

FA 2.2.4.d: Identify how images and objects are used to convey a story, familiar experience, or connection to the world

FA 2.5.1.c: Create, in a group, a tableau of a scene after hearing a story

FA 5.4.1: Students will compose, arrange, improvise read, and perform music with melodies and accompaniments

Create

FA 5.4.1.b: Create, evaluate, and refine musical ideas with teacher-generated criteria (e.g., melody, rhythm, harmony)

FA 5.4.1.d: Connect music to historical and cultural contexts and the arts through creating

Perform

FA 5.4.2.c: Perform (formally or informally) music using correct posture, breath control, rhythm, pitch, and dynamics. Demonstrate appropriate performance expectations

FA 5.4.2.d: Connect music to historical and cultural contexts and the arts through performing

Respond

FA 5.4.3: Students will identify and describe elements of music to discern how music is appropriate for specific purposes/settings (intent of music).

FA 8.2.1: Students will use the creative process to investigate and communicate personal voice in artwork

FA 8.1.1.b: Expand media arts vocabulary along with elements and principles of design in the creative process

FA 8.1.1.c: Utilize available tools, techniques, and conventions in the creation of media arts

FA 12.1.4: Students will analyze and integrate personal and global connections through media arts

NATIONAL ARTS STANDARDS

The new standards for dance, media arts, music, theatre, and visual arts were created by seventy writers representing NCCAS's arts education member organizations. More than 6,000 educators, teaching artists, parents, students and state and local focus groups offered input in four national reviews that helped shape the final standards.

The Pre-K—12 grade-by-grade standards are intended to guide educators seeking to provide quality arts education for America's students, define artistic literacy, and support 21st century skills and college and career readiness. The arts standards will be housed in the NCCA's website at www.nationalartsstandards.org.

FOOTNOTES

here— http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/educators/lessons/grade-3-4/Pioneer_Journey_West.aspx

here¹— http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/educators/lessons/grade-3-4/Pioneer_Life.aspx

here²— http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/educators/lessons/grade-3-4/Pioneer_Legendary_Westerners.aspx

here³— http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/educators/lessons/grade-3-4/Harriet_Tubman_Secret_Messages_Shared_Through_Song.aspx

here⁴— <http://www.scholastic.com/dearamerica/explorethebooks.htm/>

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FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT

Nancy Engen-Wedin
Lied Center for Performing Arts
301 N. 12th Street Lincoln, NE 68588-0151
402.472.4707 | nengenwedn2@unl.edu
liedcenter.org

