

Silver Roots

Echoing Voices: A Musical History of America

Performers

Shawn Wyckoff (flute), Maria Millar (violin) and Michael Haas (cello)

Description

Music from the homelands of immigrants shared through the stories and history of individuals who came to America. The music of 10 regions – the Netherlands, England, Ireland, Germany, Russia, Italy, Mexico, Puerto Rico, Egypt and China – is featured alongside interactive activities for audience members of all ages. (This program was first performed as part of Lincoln Center's *Meet the Artist* series in New York City.)

Program

1. **Introduction:** Why people come to America (start with present-day, transition to the 1600's when NYC – the city that was to become the portal of immigration to America - was first settled by the Dutch then taken over by the English).
2. **Part 1 - Europe - 1840 - 1930:** Irish and Germans, then Italians and Russian Jews come to America in two waves. Castle Garden opens in 1855 as the first immigrant processing facility in the US (replaced by Ellis Island in 1892). National Origins Act in 1924 restricts the flow of immigrants based on their place of origin.
3. **Part 2 - Latin America - 1930 - 1965:** Puerto Ricans and Latin Americans come to America.
4. **Part 3 - Asia - 1965 - Present Day:** South Asians, East Asians and Middle Easterners come to America. The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 makes this possible by ending discrimination based on national origin.
5. **Conclusion:** What we gain and can learn from the immigrant experience; Q & A.

Presentation Style

- Music from the immigrants' countries is introduced through a story or personal account. Each immigrant story - partnered with the corresponding music - is seen through the eyes of a different being (i.e. - a young woman, a boy, a grandmother, a father, a pet, an immigration official, a politician).
- Violin, flute and cello are the only presentational devices used. The goal of this pared-down format is to use music and stories to create a visual, multimedia experience *inside* the minds of the audience members.
- Music and story synergize to create a lasting impression of both.

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Interactive Elements

- Choose-Your-Own-Adventure – audience determines the outcome of some open-ended stories, affecting the melody, key and tempo of the music.
- Acting – individual audience members are called onto stage to enact the stories and personal accounts as they are narrated by a performer.
- Clapping and Dancing – audience claps or dances along with some of the music being performed. Clapping can determine tempo, dynamics and rubato to fit the mood of the story. Makeshift percussion instruments are used by audience members to accompany the performers.
- Q & A – performers ask audience questions and at set times during the program, take questions as well.
- First-Hand Accounts – time permitting, audience members (and performers) share their own immigrant experiences.

Discussion Points and Themes

- Why people emigrate – political, religious and/or racial exile, civil unrest, poverty, adventure, opportunity.
- How communities develop.
- Fear of that which is different – with each wave of immigrants, new cultures and languages are introduced and accepted ways of thinking are challenged.
- What we can learn from the stories of immigrants – dealing with obstacles, creating a lifeline through relationships and communities, making the most of one's skills, communicating in a new language.