



From the Top at Carnegie Hall
Episode 3: "Meeting Our Heroes"
Airing on PBS (check local TV listings)
Available online at pbs.org

Learning Activity

Title: *Guitar Is Everywhere!*

Description: A quick activity (10-15 minutes) in which students watch a guitar performance and discuss the versatility of this amazing instrument.

Grade Level: 5-8

National Music Standard: 6 Listening to, analyzing and describing music

Background

As we see in this episode, Travis Johnson has a beautiful, custom-made guitar. He selected the wood and worked with the maker on the design. He clearly loves his instrument!



Travis on stage at Carnegie Hall playing *Boppin'* by Bryan Johanson

Materials

Television or computer with DVD player; speakers, projector if needed

Activity Instructions

- 1) **Watch** the video segment that includes Travis' performance.
- 2) **Brainstorm** with students all the places they've seen and heard guitars played. What type of music do you think of when you think of a guitar? A jazz trio? A mariachi band? A flamenco guitarist? A rock band? Classical music? Who are some of the students' favorite guitar players?
- 3) **Share** some quick guitar facts:
 - The classical guitar is not part of a traditional orchestra. Its role in classical music is usually as a solo instrument.
 - Classical music is played on a classical guitar, which is an acoustic (not electronically amplified) instrument with nylon strings. It differs from other guitars in that the neck (the long bar of wood along which the strings run) is wider, leaving more room between each of the six strings. This makes it easier to play individual notes, which are emphasized in classical pieces more than chords. Also, the wider neck leaves a bit more room for the strumming hand (usually the right one) to pick out individual strings instead of strumming.
 - Another difference between classical technique and other styles is how the instrument is held. Watching Travis, you see that he holds his guitar fairly upright as opposed to almost parallel to the floor. He rests the guitar on his left knee, using a footrest to elevate his leg. This position is ideal for the strumming hand so that fingernails and fingers hit the strings at a sharper angle than in other guitar styles. Most classical guitarists also have long fingernails, since that produces a louder sound against the nylon strings than the fleshy finger pad.

Find out more!

Hear more of From the Top's young guitarists

Hear Travis play when he was only 13 on From the Top's radio show.

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=89041346>

Guitar master Christopher Parkening plays with two young guitarists, one of them his student.

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=15790075>

Another 13-year-old guitarist, Joseph Lee, began to play when he was only a toddler!

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=18313676>

Learn about the history of the guitar

Wikipedia has a comprehensive article on the guitar at:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guitar#References>

How many different kinds of guitar could there be?

See a wild collection of custom guitars at:
<http://www.otherroom.com/namm/guitars.html>



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