

A black and white photograph of Marian Anderson singing. She is standing at a podium, wearing a dark, long-sleeved velvet dress with a white square neckline and a floral brooch at the bust. Her hands are clasped in front of her. She has a dramatic expression, with her mouth open as if in the middle of a performance. The background is a dark, draped curtain. In the upper right corner, the name "Marian Anderson" is written in a white, elegant script font, with horizontal lines extending to the right. In the lower left corner, the text "Voice of the Century" is written in a white, bold, sans-serif font, with horizontal lines extending to the right.

*Marian  
Anderson*

**Voice of the Century**

# Contralto Chorister

**O**n February 27, 1897, Marian Anderson was born in South Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Her father, John, was a coal and ice salesman at the Reading Terminal Market in downtown Philadelphia. Her mother, Anna, was a former teacher from Virginia. Marian had two younger sisters named Alyce and Ethel.

**When Marian was six years old**, she began singing with the Union Baptist Church choir. She was nicknamed the "baby contralto" because she could sing low notes like a baritone as well as very high notes like a soprano. Her parents encouraged her interest in music by buying her a piano. They couldn't afford piano lessons, so Marian taught herself how to play. Later, she scrubbed steps to earn money for a violin. Her first love of music, however, remained singing.

**After her father's unexpected death**, Marian's family moved in with her grandparents. Her mother found work cleaning and laundering to help pay the family's bills. Marian went to William Penn High School before transferring to South Philadelphia High School for Girls to

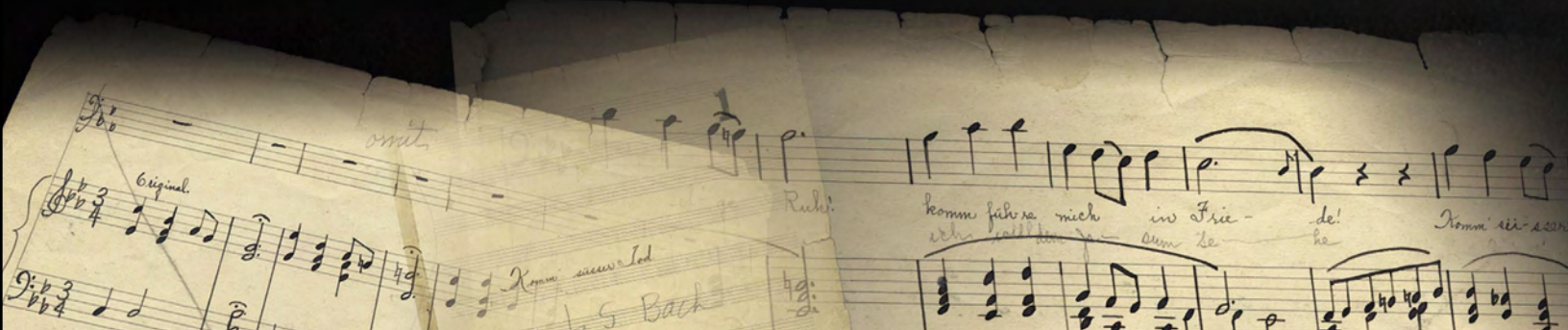
focus on singing. When she was 13, Marian joined the senior choir at church. During high school she sang with the Philadelphia Choral Society.

**Marian's church members and neighbors** were so amazed by the quality of her voice that they held a fund-raiser to pay for voice lessons with Mary Saunders Patterson, a famous Black soprano. Later, the Philadelphia Choral Society held a benefit concert to raise money for her to study with leading contralto Agnes Reifsnnyder from 1916-1918. During the summer of 1919, she studied with Oscar Sanger at the Chicago Conservatory of Music.

**After graduating** from South Philadelphia High School for Girls in 1921, Marian applied to attend a local music school. She was rejected because they didn't "take colored students." She did not give up her dream of becoming a professional singer, however. Her high school principal arranged for her to meet Guisepppe Boghetti, a very famous voice coach. Marian's audition, *Deep River*, made him cry because she had such a beautiful voice.

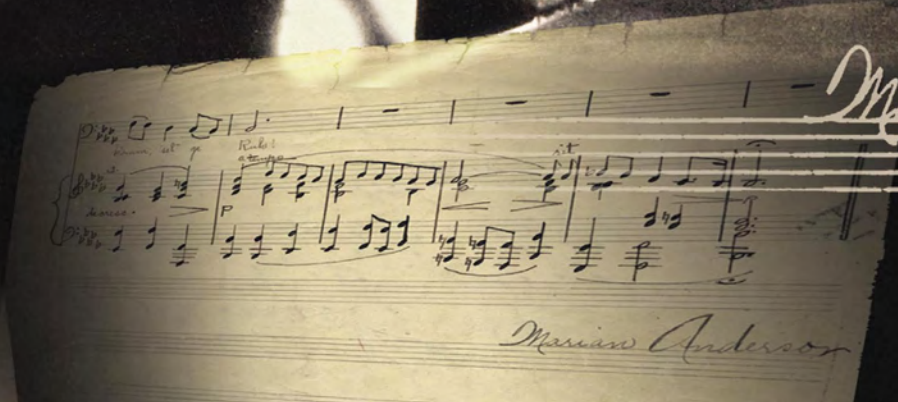


**Marian Anderson  
Commemorative Stamp**  
First Day of Issue: January 27, 2005





*Marian Anderson*



# Lesson Plan: VOICES FROM THE OPERA

**MATERIALS NEEDED:** copies of Marian Anderson biography, whiteboard, chart paper, markers, cardstock, string, rulers, paper hole punch, journals, Internet, stamp, U.S. map, world map

## SETTING THE STAGE

**Quicklist:** Give students a few moments to list three things they really enjoy doing at home or school. Brainstorm a list of these items on the board. Tell students that every person in this room has many talents, or gifts, to share with others.

**Background Information:** Back in the 1990s, a Harvard University Professor named Howard Gardner discovered that people possess several kinds of intelligence: visual/spatial, bodily/kinesthetic, interpersonal, verbal/linguistic, logical/mathematical, musical/rhythmic, intrapersonal, naturalist, and existentialist. Categorize the quicklist items by these different kinds of intelligence. Identify settings where students have an opportunity to develop their special gifts.

**Share Expectations:** This week we're going to be focusing upon Black Americans who have shared their gift of music with the world. We'll begin by studying the life of Marian Anderson, who is featured on this year's Black American History Month stamp issued by the U.S. Postal Service.

## ACTIVITY

Duplicate and distribute copies of Marian Anderson's biography. Read through this information, one section per day. Before reading each section, please take time to introduce the "tricky terms" and to set a purpose for reading using the suggestions below. After reading each section, please use the suggested response activities.

### Contralto Chorister:

■ **Tricky terms:** contralto, chorister, baritone, soprano, colored, audition

■ **Purpose:** Locate Philadelphia, PA on a map of the United States. Read to answer this question: How does Marian's childhood compare to yours?

■ **Response:** Create a Venn diagram to compare and contrast Marian's childhood with the students' personal experiences. Create a group summary of the important information in the section. Post it in the room.

### Stellar Singer:

■ **Tricky terms:** recital, foreign, philharmonic orchestra, intolerance, scholarship, prejudice, segregation, delegate, architect

■ **Purpose:** Review the Venn diagram and group summary generated during section one. What difficulties did Marian have when she was trying to begin her career? How did she overcome these problems?

■ **Response:** Use a world map to locate the various places where Marian performed. Use students' input to create a T-chart with these two column headings: problems, solutions. Discuss what strategies Marian used to overcome difficulties throughout her career. Post the chart in the room.

### Premiere Person:

■ **Tricky Terms:** impression, exceptional, desegregated, premiere, accomplished, inauguration, congressional, commemorative

■ **Purpose:** Review the group summary and T-chart from sections one and two. Have students write responses to these questions: Why did Marian Anderson receive so many awards and recognitions? How did she impact today's musicians?

■ **Response:** Create a timeline of Marian Anderson's life. Students create musical mobiles. Duplicate a musical staff on cardstock; tape a ruler onto the back for reinforcement. Suspend multiple musical notes, each "noting" a special event in Marian Anderson's life. Suspend from the ceiling.

## COMMUNITY CONNECTION

Many states and large metropolitan areas have children's theater and children's opera opportunities. Contact the local Chamber of Commerce to see if there are any children's theatre or opera companies in your region. If possible, arrange to see a production and/or to have a representative come as a guest speaker. Write a thank you card to the guest speaker or theatrical company.

## EXTENSION/ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES

Introduce students to the world of opera! Search the Internet to learn about opera and to see what opera-tunities await interested, talented students. Focus in on operas that have been specially designed for children. *Amahl and the Night Visitors* tells the Christmas story of a child who learns the value of truth and giving and is healed in return ([www.usopera.com/operas/amahl.shtml](http://www.usopera.com/operas/amahl.shtml)). *Little Red Riding Hood* ([www.operamgt.com/cot.htm](http://www.operamgt.com/cot.htm)) and *Three Little Pigs* were rewritten as operas by local companies ([www.sandlapper.org/opkids.htm](http://www.sandlapper.org/opkids.htm)). *The Story of Brundibar* has been performed world-wide ([www.oswegoopera.com/upcoming/story\\_of\\_brundibar](http://www.oswegoopera.com/upcoming/story_of_brundibar)). Share appropriate selections from famous adult-oriented operas as well, such as *Porgy and Bess*, *Les Miserables*, and *Carmen*. Talk about *The Phantom of the Opera*, an Andrew Lloyd Webber production that is coming to movie theatres this spring. Once children have become acquainted with the art of opera, encourage them to create their own opera to perform to peers and parents! They will need to write a libretto (script), select or compose music, create costumes, and stage the production.

# Stellar Singer

**M**arian Anderson began performing at local churches when she was a teenager. She gave her first professional recital on April 23, 1924 in New York City's Town Hall. Marian loved to sing opera. Most operas are written in foreign languages, and Marian was very uncomfortable singing in another language. Her discomfort showed during her performance. This experience made her consider ending her career as an opera singer. Giuseppe Boghetti still believed in Marian's ability. So, he entered her in a singing contest where she competed against 300 other singers. Marian won the contest! She got to perform with the New York Philharmonic Orchestra in Lewisohn Stadium on August 26, 1925.

**After that success,** Marian toured the eastern and southern United States. Because of racial intolerance, Marian was unable to have an active career in the United States at that time. Therefore, she decided to build a career in Europe instead. Marian used scholarship money from the Julius Rosenwald fund and the National Association of Negro Musicians to tour Europe, Scandinavia, and the former Soviet Union. Through these travels, Marian perfected her foreign language skills.

**For several years,** Marian commuted between the United States and Europe. In 1925 she visited Germany and Finland. When she performed in Helsinki, Finland, Jean Sibelius (a very famous composer) dedicated his song *Solitude* to her! On December 30, 1928 she debuted at Carnegie Hall in New York City. Then she returned to Britain to perform at London's Wigmore Hall on September 16, 1930. In 1935, Marian sang before the Archbishop of Salzburg (Austria) and leading European musicians. They asked her to give an encore of Schubert's *Ave Maria*. Her performance was so exceptional that Arturo Toscanini, a famous conductor, said "A voice like yours is heard once in a hundred years."

**By then, Marian had become** a world-famous singer who was in great demand in Europe and in the United States. She hired a very famous manager, Sol Hurok, and became the country's third largest box office draw! Marian averaged 70 concerts per year. She gave another recital in the New York City Town Hall on December 20, 1935. This time it was a wonderful experience! After giving two concerts at Carnegie Hall, she toured the entire United States, coast to coast. Then she toured Europe and Latin America in 1938. She was even invited to sing a private concert for King George VI and Queen Elizabeth of Britain and President and Mrs. Roosevelt at the White House! She was the first Black American to entertain at the White House.

**Despite her popularity** and the admiration of her millions of fans, Marian still encountered racial prejudice in the United States. She was often refused

accommodations at "white-only" hotels and restaurants. In 1939, Sol Hurok and Howard University officials wanted Marian to perform at Constitution Hall. The Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), who owned the hall, refused to let her sing there because they had a policy stating they allowed "concerts by whites only". First Lady, Eleanor Roosevelt, who was a DAR board member, resigned her membership in protest, as did many other women. Mrs. Roosevelt, Sol Hurok, and Walter White of the NAACP encouraged Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes to arrange a free open-air concert on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. On April 9, 1939, Marian sang an Easter Sunday program for 75,000 people and millions of radio listeners.

**A few years later,** the Daughters of the American Revolution invited Marian to sing at Constitution Hall to benefit relief programs in China. She accepted on the condition that they suspend their segregated seating policy for the concert. Marian performed a Constitution Hall recital to a capacity crowd on March 13, 1943.

**On January 7, 1955,** Marian made one of the most important performances of her career as the character Ulrica in the New York Metropolitan Opera production of *Un Ballo in Maschera* (A Masked Ball) by Giuseppe Verdi. She was the first Black American to be a lead performer at the Met as a regular company member!

**In 1957,** the Department of State, United Nations, American National Theater and Academy, and Morrows' television series See IT Now co-sponsored a 35,000 mile, 12-week tour of India and the Far East. Marian's international outreach continued in 1958 when she was appointed a delegate of the United Nations Human Rights Committee. In 1962, Marian toured Australia. In 1963, she sang at the "March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom".

**In 1965,** Marian was ready to retire. She took an extended farewell world tour which opened at Constitution Hall and ended at Carnegie Hall. Her last recital was on Easter Sunday, April 19, 1965 at a concert conducted by her nephew, James DePriest.

**Marian and her husband,** Orpheus Fisher, an architect whom she'd known since childhood, retired to their 155-acre farm in Connecticut. Her husband died in 1986. In 1992, Marian moved into her nephew, James DePriest's home in Portland, Oregon. She suffered a stroke and died of congestive heart failure on April 8, 1993, just four years before her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday! More than 2,000 admirers attended her memorial service held at Carnegie Hall.

# Premiere Person

**M**arian Anderson was admired not only for her vocal talents, but also for her grace and dignity. She felt inspired by her audiences, and insisted on desegregated seating at her concerts. Marian believed in treating people with dignity because, as she said, "As long as you keep a person down, some part of you has to be down there to hold the person down, so it means you cannot soar as you otherwise might." Her philosophy of life was described in her book, *My Lord, What a Morning*, published in 1956. One example of her caring attitude occurred in a small Nebraska town. When a college student told Marian how disappointed she was that she hadn't been able to attend the concert, Marian sang Ave Maria just for that student, right there in the hotel lobby!

**Marian left a positive**, lasting impression on the millions of people whose lives she touched. She once said "I always bear in mind that my mission is to leave behind me the kind of impression that will make it easier for those who follow." Because of her exceptional efforts, many other Black singers have been inspired to achieve their dreams.

**Marian won many awards** for being a premiere person and accomplished singer. In 1939, Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt presented her with the NAACP's Springarn Award for achievement by a Black American. When Philadelphia gave her the Bok Outstanding Philadelphia Citizen Award in 1941, Marian used the \$10,000 award money to establish the Marian Anderson Scholarship Fund for music students of all races. She was formally recognized by the Finnish government in 1949. King Gustav of Sweden awarded her the "Litteris et Artibus" medal in 1952. Marian received the United States Presidential Medal of Honor in 1963 and sang at the inauguration ceremonies of Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy. In 1977, Marian received the United Nations Peace Prize. First Lady Rosalyn Carter awarded her with the New York City Handel Medallion and a congressional resolution of congratulations in honor of her 75th birthday. Marian earned a congressional gold medal and was honored for a lifetime of achievement at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in 1978.

**In 1980**, the U.S. Treasury Department coined a half-ounce gold commemorative medal in her likeness. In 1998, they placed her picture on the \$5,000 bond note! Marian also received the Eleanor Roosevelt Human Rights Award (1984). In 1991, she was given the Grammy award for Lifetime Achievement and President Ronald Reagan presented her with the National Medal of Arts from the National Endowment for the Arts. Furthermore, the St. Christopher's Hospital for Children's pediatric sickle-cell anemia clinic and research center was named in her honor.

**Marian Anderson continues** to be honored even after her death. On the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of her birth, George E. Brown of California and 13 other congressmen introduced the Marian Anderson Centennial Commemorative Coin. People can still learn a great deal from this premiere person by visiting the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg Rare Book and Manuscript Library which contains Marian Anderson's personal papers, scores, photographs, sound recordings, and programs.

**Perhaps the greatest tribute** to the life and talent of Marian Anderson was given by her manager, Sol Hurok. He said: "In any century only a handful of extraordinary men and women are known to countless millions around the globe as great artists and great persons. Only a few inspire the adoration and respect of the mighty and humble alike. In our time there is Marian Anderson." Bravo, Marian Anderson, for the performance of your lifetime!



*Marian Anderson singing at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, DC, on April 9, 1939.*

# Lesson Plan: VOICES FROM THE PAST

**MATERIALS NEEDED:** chart paper and markers, reference materials, Internet, bulletin board, sound equipment (cassette, CD player), Power Point, poster paper, dice, manila envelope, index cards, miniature whiteboards and markers

## SETTING THE STAGE

**Quicktalk:** Who is your current favorite performing artist? What makes this artist's music so special? Give students a few moments to think. Share with a partner. Share with the class.

**Transition/Expectations:** Many of today's artists have been influenced by exceptional performers from the past. Marian Anderson inspired many Black opera singers, including Leontyne Price, Jesse Norman, Shirley Verrett, and Kathleen Battle. Several Black American musicians have been honored by the U.S. Postal Service for their contributions to the world of music and America's heritage. During the next few days you are going to be learning about these famous musicians and their unique musical styles. We'll be focusing upon blues, jazz, and contemporary musicians.

## NOTEWORTHY MUSICIANS

- 1 Create a musical matrix chart (grid) to post in the room. Headings across the top should read: Style of Music, History, Characteristics, Famous Artists, Famous Songs. Vertical headings on the left side should read: Blues, Jazz, Contemporary. Note: contemporary refers to music that is gospel or a blend of the other genres.
- 2 Divide students into "expert teams" representing the three genres of music (blues, jazz, contemporary).
- 3 Students conduct research to learn about the style of music and its characteristics. One outstanding resource is <http://trackstar.4teachers.org/trackstar>. Encourage students to listen to actual recordings of the selected genre. Expert teams prepare mini-presentations to share the genre's history, characteristics, and artists with the rest of the class.
- 4 After each mini-presentation, complete appropriate sections of the musical matrix.
- 5 Divide students into research pairs. Older students might wish to conduct research independently. Students will be focusing in upon specific artists for each genre. Generate a class list of possible research questions (i.e. When was the musician born? What was the musician's childhood like? What problems did the artist have to overcome? Why is this musician famous?). Students conduct research on selected musicians. Musicians may include people students have discovered through their expert team research and/or those in the following list who have been honored in the past by the U.S. Postal Service.

- **Blues:** W.C. Handy, Howlin' Wolf, Robert Johnson, Leadbelly (Huddie William Ledbetter), Muddy Waters (McKinley Morganfield), Ma Rainey (Gertrude Malissa Nix Pridgett), Jimmy Rushing, Bessie Smith
- **Jazz:** Count Basie, John Coltrane, Duke Ellington, Errol Garner, Coleman Hawkins, Billie Holiday, Jelly Roll Morton (Ferdinand Joseph La Menthe), Charlie Parker
- **Popular:** Roberta Martin, Louis Armstrong, Eubie Blake, Nat King Cole, Clara Ward, Josh White, Otis Redding, Charles Mingus, Sister Rosetta Tharpe, Clyde McPhatter, Mahalia Jackson, James P. Johnson, Scott Joplin, Thelonious Monk, Ethel Waters, Dinah Washington, Josh White

6 Students share what they have learned using one of these options:

- Design one or more slides which become part of a whole-class Power Point slideshow. Insert musical clips and photographs of the artists.
- Create a "Noteworthy Musicians" bulletin board. Students create posters promoting their artists. Posters should include pictures of the artists and some information about their lives.
- Students dress up as their selected artists. They tell about "their lives" and play recordings of the artists' music.

7 **Quicktalk:** At the beginning of this lesson, students talked about their favorite musicians. Discuss how current performing artists' musical styles may have been influenced by famous blues and jazz musicians of the past.

## NAME THAT MUSICIAN

Researchers give 5 important facts about their musicians to the teacher. Divide class into heterogeneous teams of 6-members each. Distribute information to the teams. Each team is responsible for coaching all team members to learn the information. Meanwhile, the teacher transfers the facts (and musician names) onto individual index cards and places the cards in a big manila envelope. On the day of the "Name That Musician" competition, have each team sit together. Nobody gets to use any notes. Give each team a miniature whiteboard and marker. Number off team members, 1-6. Teacher draws a card reads the five facts before saying "Name That Musician". Teacher rolls the die and calls out the number. The student who has that number writes down the musician's name and holds up the whiteboard at the designated time. All team members who try to answer earn one point, whether the answer is correct or not. Team members who answer correctly earn two points. The team with the highest score wins.

"The faith and confidence of others in me have been like guiding stars."

*Marian Anderson*



JAZZ



GOSPEL



POP



BLUES



OPERA



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