



Newsletter

We nourish our neighborhoods with the transformative power of music through education and performance. Your support makes a difference in the lives of kindergarten through 12th grade students as well as families in music deserts, senior communities and adult day centers. The ROOTS Newsletter shares stories of how ROOTS' music changes lives, touches the heart, and restores memories and human connection to residents of Northeast Ohio.



**WATCHING STUDENTS
GROW IS "TRULY A
REWARDING
EXPERIENCE"**

Esther Fitz, ROOTS Teaching & Performing Artist

Esther Fitz has been involved with Roots of American Music for about 3 years. She started working with ROOTS as a performing artist and was later contacted about the Stop the Hate music education program. “I wasn’t sure what to expect when I was approached about becoming involved in Stop the Hate,” she says. “But the more I thought about it, I wanted to give it a try.”

Fitz describes her first day with a new class as a mix of awkwardness and excitement. The primary goal of the first day is to introduce the concept and take the students from what they’ve seen in the video tour of the Maltz Museum to what they want to see changed in the world. “I like to have an open discussion to learn more about the types of music the students like.” In learning more about the students’ musical preference, the project starts to take a direction — whether they will sing or rap, themes big and small, and so on. As a group, they come up with five possible song titles and take a vote.

“Kids appreciate options and autonomy,” Fitz says. “Being more involved in the process gives them more pride in their contributions and more investment in the song.” Still, every class is different. “Some classes thrive in an open setting. Others prefer private work.”

Fitz refers to the second class as Concept Day. She shares her own journey from writing poetry to creating songs and digs into the themes discussed in the first session. They create four line mini-poems, as she calls them, which will be stitched together to make a cohesive song.

“We spend most of our time crafting lyrics,” Fitz says. “And once the lyrics begin taking shape, we choose a beat.” Selecting a beat works in the same way as the song title — Fitz presents options and the students vote. The process continues.

“It’s important to make the content smaller and more manageable,” Fitz says. “There is a lot of power in simplicity, and I like to share that with the students.” On recording day, when the final song will be put to tape, as it were, Fitz brings in candy to keep the mood light. “I feel a strong calling to teach. I strive to be a positive influence and a source of relief for my students, regardless of their other subjects.”

Leaving the classroom for the last time can be emotional. “By the fifth day, I’ve formed deep bonds with my students. Knowing that I won’t see them in the hallway anymore, especially if it’s my last day at that school, can be sad.” But, she continues, “Watching students grow and move on to high school is truly a rewarding experience.”

While each class is special, one in particular stands out. “I had an all-boys class, which was unusual. There were 25-30 boys in the class, and while there can be chaos with that many boys, they worked surprisingly well together. It was like a brotherhood. We had a great time creating and recording that song.”

Shortly after, one of the students tragically passed away. The song they had created, “Harmony,” was played throughout the school as classmates mourned. “It was a reminder of the brotherhood and harmony we should strive for.”

“You never truly know what kids are going through,” Fitz says. “Programs like Stop the Hate provide an outlet for expression and a chance to have genuine conversations about their lives. Adults can sometimes dismiss or ignore their concerns.”



Stop the Hate Youth Sing Out is a collaboration with the Maltz Museum

During the 2023-24 School Year ROOTS served 1,419 middle and high school students from 67 classrooms among 12 schools. Students worked collaboratively to pen and perform their own songs, using their voices to advocate for change.

[Select this link for more information](#) about bringing this music education program to your school.

Blues is the Backbone

Is being presented in the following schools now through the end of this 2024 fall semester:

- Anton Grdina School
- Ben Franklin Elementary School
- R. G. Jones
- Valley View Boys Leadership Academy
- Warner Girls Leadership Academy

You can bring this program to your classroom!



ROOTS IN THE SCHOOLS

Blues is the Backbone is an age-appropriate, cross curricular education program offered for kindergarten and second grade students reinforcing language arts, music and social emotional learning standards. Through the exploration of blues musicians, history, and culture, the students will improve literacy skills, enhance music skills, and gain confidence through social emotional learning. Blues is the Backbone culminates with students writing lyrics to their own class song.

FOR MORE INFORMATION EMAIL EDUCATION@ROOTSOFAMERICANMUSIC.ORG

**Small Investment
Big Returns**

**Public Funding for Our
Nonprofit Arts + Culture
Benefits Everyone**



Receives Funding from
Cuyahoga Arts & Culture

ISSUE 55 PASSES: THANK YOU CUYAHOGA COUNTY VOTERS!!

With the approval of this measure, the existing tax on cigarettes will be adjusted, ensuring an estimated \$160 million in funding over the next decade. This crucial support will allow Cuyahoga Arts and Culture (CAC) to continue enriching Cuyahoga County's arts and culture landscape through grants that reach a diverse range of nonprofit organizations. "We are profoundly grateful for the passage of Issue 55. This victory represents a commitment to fostering creativity, inclusivity, and economic growth in our community. Thanks to Cuyahoga County voters, we can continue supporting the

organizations and those individuals that benefit from this public investment,” said Chinenye Nkemere, Assembly for the Arts Board Chair.

[LEARN MORE](#)

YOUR YEAR-END DONATION SUPPORTS ROOTS

ROOTS programs receive *just 60%* of funding from public and private foundations.

Your generosity is vital to the ROOTS mission to nourish northeast Ohio communities with the transformative power of music through education and performance.

Please consider a donation today so we can bring music that changes lives, touches the heart, and restores memories and human connection to residents of Northeast Ohio.

General Donation

Impact A Specific Program

Crescendo Awards Sponsorships



ROOTS Teaching Artist accompanies Stop the Hate Youth Sing Out students at the 2023-24 Awards. During the 2023-24 School Year ROOTS served 1,419 middle and high school students from 67 classrooms among 12 schools.



ROOTS Teaching Artist, Charlie Mosbrook leads a Blues is the Backbone music education class. During the 2023-24 school year ROOTS Teaching Artists presented Blues is the Backbone music education program to 32 classes serving 705 K-3 grade students.



ROOTS Performing Artists Jack Mizenko and Mark Ronan provide music enrichment to adults with disabilities. ROOTS provides music enrichment and holiday performances to adults in day programs and senior residential and memory-care facilities. During 2023-24 ROOTS served 18 locations in northeast Ohio through 22 monthly performances.

“Even if a song is written by an adult for other adults, children can also find meaning in it based on their life experiences. We never know how, when, or where the musical process will impact students.

These unexpected, in-between moments where music just does its thing, and we hold space for it, are so valuable.”

Beth Gatchell, ROOTS Teaching Artist

We are grateful to our Foundation Partners



Thank You to Our Recent Funders!



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And individual donors like you!

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