

THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE

Jazz, Poetry, and Art

The National Blues Museum located in St. Louis, is committed to preserving the legacy and honoring the history of the music that gave voice to generations. Blues, baby, is the root of all American music, which led to the birth of Jazz during the Harlem Renaissance. Through exhibitions, school outreach, concerts and more they help teach how this beautiful music has touched and influenced every corner of the U.S. and beyond, as well as continue to employ and provide opportunities for musicians in the St. Louis area.

Dr. Robert Nelson, Executive Director, National Blues Museum, custom curated a unique and educational jazz program for Mt. Vernon District 80 students called "The Harlem Renaissance – Jazz, Art and Poetry. Robert invited four professional jazz musicians to perform over a two-day period for over 1700 students. During the assemblies they told the story of The Great Migration and what makes Jazz music so unique, all while interacting with students. Read more about Blues museum and its mission at <https://www.nationalbluesmuseum.org/>

Dr. Erika Johnson is a remarkable figure in the St. Louis Metropolitan music community, recognized for her multifaceted contributions as an educator, activist, and vocalist. A proud native of East St. Louis, she began her musical journey singing with the Lincoln Senior High School Jazz Band and later showcased her talents with Jackson State University's big jazz band. Known for her unique word scatting style, Erika draws inspiration from legendary artists such as Eddie Jefferson and Betty Carter. Her impressive career includes performances at prestigious venues like The Blue Note in Italy and the Detroit Jazz Festival, as well as collaborations with icons like the Cab Calloway Big Band.

Johnson's journey is a powerful testament to the transformative power of music and education. Her work encourages us all to support and engage with the arts, ensuring that future generations have access to the opportunities that can inspire and elevate their lives.



2025
BLACK HISTORY MONTH
Celebration
THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE
Jazz, Poetry, and Art



A collaboration between
Mount Vernon City Schools, District 80
and Cedarhurst Center for the Arts

Featuring music and art by District 80 students

Presented by
Mount Vernon City Schools, District 80

THURSDAY FEBRUARY 27 | 6:00 TO 7:00 PM

BHM Program Sponsors:

- George & Paula (Mace) Kuhn
- Kevin & Cheryl Settle
- The Bernard and Naomi L. Podolsky Charitable Trust

With support from:

The Schweinfurth Foundation



The Celebration

INTRODUCTIONS

Ryan Swan, District 80 Superintendent

PROGRAM EMCEE

Carleka Spann, speaker and author

Speaker and author | Spero Family Services

INVOCATION

Bishop James Gordon, Sr.

Southtown Apostolic Church

WHAT A WONDERFUL WORLD

Performed by Primary Center 3rd Grade Choir

Directed by Krista Witges. Written by Bob Thiele and George David Weiss. Recorded by Louis Armstrong.

IT DON'T MEAN A THING (IF IT AIN'T GOT THAT SWING)

Performed by Primary Center 3rd Grade Choir

Directed by Krista Witges.

Composed by Duke Ellington. Lyrics by Irving Mills

2025 Black History Month Theme:

The Harlem Renaissance - Jazz, Poetry, and Art

Carrie Stover, Director-Shrode Art Center at Cedarhurst

DREAMING

Written by Dorthea Taylor, adapted by Mrs. Zgonina

AS I GREW OLDER AND DREAM

By Langston Hughes

Performed by Mrs. Zgonina and Ms. Brose 3rd grade TAG students

SWING LOW, SWEET CHARIOT/ WHEN THE SAINTS GO MARCHING IN

Casey Middle School Choir | Directed by Mary Wright

CENTERPIECE

Performed by Casey Middle School Jazz Band

Directed by Jessica Weise Music by Henry "Sweets" Edison.

Lyrics by John Hendricks. Arranged by Mike Story.

NEW SONG

Performed by J.L. Buford Choir

Written and directed by Greg Backes

THANK YOU

Closing Remarks

Special Thanks

to the teachers, staff and administrators
who help make this program possible each year.

Paula Metcalf

Mt. Vernon City Schools District 80

Director of Curriculum and Instruction

Principals

Lori Given, Dr. Andy Hall School

Cindy Kessler, Dr. Nick Osborne Primary Center

Michelle Baxter, J. L. Buford Intermediate Center

Scott Williams, Zadok Casey Middle School

Hall Pre-K Educator

Amy Wylie

Nick Osborne Primary Center Educators

Art – Brandi Halama

Music – Krista Witges

Library – Mallory Bullington

PE – Mandy Evans

Tech/Stem – Alis Jones

TAG – Valerie Zgonina

J.L. Buford Educators

Art – Jaylin Henry

Music – Greg Backes

Library – Cynthia Borchert

PE – Randy Phillips

Tech/Stem – Bethanie Reynolds

TAG – Karla Rutherford

Zadok Casey Middle School Educators

Art – Hannah Flatt

Music – Mary Wright, Jessica Weise

Library – Kellie Wellen

PE – Oryssa Uhls, Hannah Campbell

TAG – Andrea Rulevish

Cedarhurst Center for the Arts

Carrie Stover, Director Shrode Art Center

Hillary Esser, Executive Director