Welcome to the Walton Arts Center Performance Guide, published by the Programming department of Walton Arts Center. This guide is designed to enhance your learning in the arts. Enjoy the performance, and thanks for being part of the 2007-2008 Colgate Classroom series.

Blues is a musical style originating in America’s southland and influencing musicians around the world. Born in the Mississippi Delta, blues music tells of the struggle of people from Arkansas, Mississippi and Louisiana. Like jazz, blues is a uniquely American art form that the world has embraced.
Guy Davis was born and raised in a theatrical family in New York City. Although raised in the city, he learned the stories of Southern country life from his father and grandmother. As a child he grew to love the traditional blues music of Blind Willie McTell, Mississippi John Hurt and others. As a teenager, he taught himself to play the guitar. In a true blues tradition, he learned his distinctive finger picking style from a nine-fingered guitarist while traveling on a train.

**An Artist**

Guy has worked as a professional musician, storyteller and actor since 1978. In 1991, he was featured in the Broadway production of *Mulebone*, based on the writings of Zora Neale Hurston and Langston Hughes with music by Taj Mahal. Two years later he won the Blues Foundation’s W.C. Handy “Keeping the Blues Alive” Award for playing the title role in the off-Broadway production *Robert Johnson: Trick the Devil*.

As a storyteller he collaborated with his parents Ruby Dee and Ossie Davis in *Two Hah Hahs and a Homeboy*, combining original material with African-American folklore and history. As a composer, he wrote the music for the PBS series *The American Promise*. He won an Emmy for his score for the telefilm *To Be A Man*.

For the past ten years he has been writing and performing in the acoustic country blues tradition, and is a leading voice in that style. His recordings include: *Stomp Down Rider, Call Down the Thunder, You Don't Know My Mind, Give in Kind, Legacy* and *Skunkmello*, all on Red House label. Critics agree Guy is a consummate bluesman who has developed his style from the Delta blues.

**An Educator**

As an educator Guy teaches at the Lincoln Center Summer Institute, and at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. He is a master storyteller, a singer and instrumentalist, equally adept playing guitar, banjo and harmonica. Guy is an artist and an educator who has learned valued traditions in the performing arts by listening and learning directly from great performers. Learn more about Guy at his website: www.guydavis.com
The performance:
The audience will hear the blues in a wailing harmonica solo. The music conveys several motifs including a sense of wandering, the sound of a train, a guitar, and a storyteller expressing the feelings of heartache or humor. Guy Davis will teach about the instruments used to play the blues including: harmonica and guitar. Each instrument uses its own language and seems best suited to tell certain kinds of blues stories. Guy shows by example how the blues as a musical form emerged from work songs. Students will participate in the rhythmic and kinesthetic experience of a work song by singing and moving. Students will experience the sounds and understand the feelings that created the blues form of music. They will see and hear the instruments that are primarily used in playing the blues. They will learn the difference between Delta and East Coast Blues. They will be aware of the history of how the blues emerged in Arkansas and our country as a whole.

Blues in Arkansas

The blues journey in Arkansas is a lively part of a popular musical form. The Mississippi River along our eastern border was a point of origin for the blues. The Arkansas Delta region was subject to annual overflow of the river. Uncertainties and hardships of living in this region shaped the expressions of the people who worked on the land. Struggle and loss were themes in their songs. The unique phrasing and rhythm of their songs shaped the blues form.

The blues in Arkansas borrowed story telling qualities of African-American work songs sung by sharecropping farmers, riverboat workers, and timber cutters in Arkansas. The vocal and instrumental sound of the blues was sung by workers in cotton fields of the Delta. The rhythm of blues was influenced by songs of convict laborers who helped rebuild levees after the Mississippi River flooded Arkansas in 1927. The blues rhythms echoed the sound of their back-breaking work. Blues music became a way to understand the life and times of working class African-Americans in the Arkansas Delta.

Delta blues spread across Arkansas during the 1920’s. Radio stations in Little Rock, Fort Smith, Hot Springs and Fayetteville broadcast popular blues music by live orchestras like Dale’s Blue Melody Boys, Waymon Griffin’s Orchestra and Black Diamond Serenaders. Helena and West Memphis, Arkansas were important centers for blues artists during the 1930’s and 1940’s. The King Biscuit Time and other programs made blues artists like Sonny Boy Williamson, James Cotton and Howlin’ Wolf famous. Today blues continues to be broadcast from Helena and is one of the longest running blues program in America.

Learn more about music in Arkansas by reading Our Own Sweet Sounds, a Celebration of Popular Music in Arkansas by Robert Cochran or visit the Delta Cultural Center website: www.deltaculturalcenter.com

Blues Journey Background

The blues was played in towns along the Mississippi River from New Orleans through the delta regions of Arkansas and Mississippi, and north to Chicago. Earliest influences of the blues were African singers who came to the Americas in slave ships. Two types of African-American songs, work songs and “spiritual hollers” gave the blues its unique sound. That sound could be soulful, sad or spirited, determined and even happy.

Some of the people who influenced the sound of the blues include:
W.C. Handy (1873-1958) left Alabama to work in Memphis and became one of the first artists to publish a blues song. His blues compositions include “St. Louis Blues” and “Careless Love.” He is called the “Father of the Memphis Blues,” and the premier award for a blues artist is the W.C. Handy Blues Award.

Louis Jordan, (1908-1975) from Brinkley Arkansas, was one of the chief songwriters to popularize East Coast blues. Jordan recorded 57 blues “crossover” hits during the 1940’s.

Muddy Waters, (1915-1983) Howlin’ Wolf (1910-1976) and B.B. King (1925 - ) made a transition in the blues from the 1950’s through the Civil Rights period. Blues songs had always expressed injustice and the struggle for equality. But with the rise of the black power and the civil rights movement, the blues seemed old fashioned to younger black audiences and more important to white audiences.

British blues-rock artists like John Mayall, Eric Clapton and George Harrison borrowed blues sound and structure and changed rock and roll in the 1960’s and 70’s. Like jazz, the blues is considered a uniquely American Art form admired world wide.
Activity: Students Create Blues Lyrics

What makes the note “blue”? The unique sound of a “blue note” makes the listener feel soulful and sad. Technically what is happening in a western music context is that blue notes are played below pitch. They are usually made by lowering the note a half step to the third, fifth or seventh position of a major scale. However the note is made technically, the effect offers many possibilities for musicians to express emotion in sound. The blue note gives the blues its special feeling.

Classic Twelve Bar Blues

What kind of structure would you expect in a classic blues song?

In musical terms, an AB is a musical plan that has two different parts or sections.

A standard popular American song has 32 bars of music, usually formed as:

8 measures of A
8 measures of A
8 measures of B
8 measures of A

The blues is built on three short musical phrases, usually in 4/4 time. A standard blues song has 12 bars of music and a three-line verse. Each line of the verse corresponds to 4 measures of music. The rhyming structure is A-A-B. The first line of the lyrics is often repeated. The verses build on a theme. A blues song may or may not have a narrative. The blues break is a response to the “call” in a 12-bar blues song. For example, a singer sings and the instrument answers the singer at the end of the three phrases. The standard blues structure is:

4 measures of A
4 measures of A
4 measures of B

Good Morning Blues is a traditional example of the classic twelve-bar blues song. Musically its lonesome sound is communicated through harmonies and repetition of ideas.

Well, good morning blues, blues how do you do? (A)
Well, good morning blues, blues how do you do? (A)
Well, I’m doin’ all right, good morning how are you? (B)

I got up this morning, blues walkin’ round my bed. (A)
I got up this morning, blues walkin’ round my bed. (A)
Went to eat my breakfast, blues was in my bread. (B)

—Traditional

Blues music has a distinct structure in theme, repetition and chorus.

Ask students to research examples of blues songs. Read the lyric samples from Guy Davis and on pages 7 and 10. You can research other samples at the Delta Cultural Center website.

www.deltaculturalcenter.com

Discuss the theme, content and form of the lyrics. Traditionally blues lyrics often convey struggle, loss, regret and blame. Even when the subject of the song is specific, the feelings expressed are universal. Love is often the subject.

Discuss the standard blues form for lyrics, including:

> Three lines of words
> First two lines are the same
> Rhyme the last word of line three with the last word of lines one and two.

Students to choose a historical character or event in Arkansas and write lyrics on the theme of struggle.

In groups students can write three lines individually then refine one set of lyrics. Students practice the lyrics by saying them aloud then listening to feedback. Students read the lyrics in unison. Each team is invited to share the lyrics they have developed. Other students use performance and audience etiquette in listening.

> Arkansas Learning Standards

PP 1.2 Identify and discuss various racial/ethnic groups and cultures in historical and contemporary Arkansas through writing, literature and fine arts.
Focus Questions
(Before the Performance)

Music
1. Have you heard blues music?
2. Can you think of the name of a blues singer?
3. Compare a blues song to storytelling. How are they alike?
4. Research two important artists in blues history. (Examples: W.C. Handy, Ma Rainey, Muddy Waters or Howlin' Wolf) How did they contribute to the style of music we call the blues?
5. What does it mean to “sing the blues” to “feel blue?”
6. Do we sing songs about troubles or struggle?
7. Do you think people feel better when they express themselves in music?
8. What are the instruments that make the sound of the blues?

History
1. Who are people in Arkansas History who embody the idea of struggle?
2. What are places in Arkansas where struggle has been expressed? Describe the opposing forces of the struggle.
3. What events in Arkansas History have been most memorable, and should be remembered in a song?

Storytelling activity
Every family has stories to tell. Telling stories helps us remember who we are. Telling stories helps us write songs and share authentic feelings. Talk to elders in your family or community. Ask them a few simple questions, then listen and remember, take notes, or journal. Use their oral history of Arkansas stories to write a blues song. Listen for sense words: sight, sound, taste, touch. There are memorable people, places and events in your life. Take the time to listen to them.

Questions to prompt a story:
1. Can you remember a pet you once had?
2. Can you remember a trip you would not want to take again?
3. Can you remember a time when you got into trouble for something you had been told not to do?

Guitar with a Name
Blues musicians valued their instruments and sometimes named them in honor of someone special.

The story goes that blues artist, B.B. King named his guitar “Lucille” after an Arkansas lady. In the 1950’s, B.B. was playing the blues in a roadhouse near Twist, Arkansas when a fight broke out over a lady. The brawlers knocked over a kerosene-filled pail that was heating the place, setting the house on fire. In the frantic scramble to escape the flames, B.B. King ran outside without his guitar. He foolishly ran back in to retrieve it, almost losing his life. When the smoke cleared, he learned that the lady that inspired such sparks was named Lucille.

B.B. King’s guitar is a legend, but the banjo and harmonica are also important blues instruments.

Learn more in All Music Guide to the Blues, 2005, Backbeat Books, San Francisco, CA
Research a variety of characters from Arkansas’ rich history. Use them as subjects to compose a tableau (page 8) with accompanying story or song lyrics.

René-Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle, 17th century explorer
John Law, 17th century promoter of Arkansas settlement
William Dunbar, farmer and scientist commissioned by Jefferson to explore the Ouachita River
George Hunter, medical doctor who explored the Ouachita River with Dunbar
Arkansas Traveler, 19th century humorous character
James Sevier Conway, First Governor of Arkansas, 1836
Albert Pike, 19th century pioneer, soldier, lawyer, journalist
Isaac C. Parker, judge of western Arkansas from 1875-1896
Scott Joplin, composer and pianist, King of Ragtime (1868-1917)
Senator Hattie Caraway, first woman elected to the US Senate, 1932
Bill Broonzy, blues musician in Little Rock 1920’s
William Grant Still, blues influenced composer of operas and symphonies, 1895-1978
Johnny Cash, popular recording artist 1932-2003
Miller Williams, contemporary poet and educator born 1930
Elizabeth Eckford, Central High School student 1957
Eldridge Cleaver, social activist1935-1998
James William Fulbright, Arkansas senator from 1944-1974
Sam Walton, business leader, 1918-1992
E. Fay Jones, artist and architect, 1921-2004

Activity

Explore a unique character from Arkansas’ history. Each person faced challenges and struggled to achieve their goals.

Examples:
Henri De Tonti – 17th century Explorer and early settler at Arkansas Post
Thomas Nuttall – 19th century naturalist in Arkansas River Valley
Louis Jordan – 1940’s popular composer, band leader and bluesman
Daisy Bates – 1950’s Civil Rights activist in Little Rock
Maya Angelou – contemporary poet
William Jefferson Clinton – 1990’s U.S. President

> Use primary documents (actual documents created by the person) and secondary documents (documents created by others about the person.) Visit www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net
> Read biographic information about significant contributions made by Arkansans.
> Examine both cultural and historical events in their lives.
> Describe a moment of struggle in their life.
> Use sensory images to imagine their struggle.
> Write what you think they might have:
  Seen – Heard – Tasted – Smelled – Touched
> Write in the “voice” of the character you have studied. Respond to the following statements:
  1. Arkansas shaped my character to help me face my struggle.
  2. Struggle caused me to change things in this way…
  3. Struggle changed me in this way…
  4. If I could tell you one secret, it would be…
> Write a verse for a blues song, repeating the first 2 lines and adding a concluding 3rd line.

> Arkansas Learning Standards
TCC.1. Examine and analyze stories of important Arkansans and their contributions to our society.
TCC.1.2. Explore, interpret, analyze, and evaluate multiple types of primary and secondary sources to show how traditions help people maintain continuity and ties with the past.
Help your Students respond to a performance

Help your students listen to, analyze, describe and evaluate the Guy Davis Blues Journey performance.

Use some of the questions below to guide your students. These questions help students develop and expand their responses. Practicing the reflective process helps students be more specific in describing what they experience.

Questions for students:

> Describe the performance of one song in as much detail as possible.
> What instruments were used?
> Describe the quality of voice.
> How was the song organized? AAB? How many verses? Solo lines? Call and response?
> Describe the rhythm.

Performances are made of several elements including: what you see, what you hear and what you feel. How do the genres of music, storytelling and the performing arts work together?

Performances share visual aural and emotional experiences. What did you see, hear and feel?

Analyze artist choices:

> Notice the elements that made the performance. How did they relate to each other?
> What choices did the artist make that you noticed?
> How did the musical elements of tempo, pitch, and dynamics convey mood?
> Were these elements used to convey the story?
> What instruments did you notice? How did the choice of instruments shape the musical idea?
> When and how did the artist choose to use his voice to convey the story or feeling?
> Did the text relate to the music?

Interpret the work

> Synthesize your thoughts. How does everything you notice fit together to make meaning?
> Using your descriptions and analysis, develop your interpretation of a song or the performance.
> What ideas might the artist have tried to convey?
> What issue was the artist concerned with?
> Can you connect your own experience with any moments in the song?
> Does the song mean something to you personally?
> What other meanings might it have?
> Did the artist express a universal feeling or idea?

When students respond to a performance from the point of view of an actively involved listener in a live, theatrical setting, they understand our world by interpreting what they experience. Students learn through live performances. Questions teachers ask before and after the performance helps students discover more. For students, the learning process of seeing and responding prompts future inquiry.

> Arkansas Learning Standards
TCC.2.5. Interact with Arkansas literature and the arts to show how traditions help people maintain continuity and ties with the past.

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Lyrics Traditional

Rolling In My Sweet Baby's Arms
Traditional with additional words by Guy Davis © 2004

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I'll be rolling in my sweet baby's arms
I'll be rolling in my sweet baby's arms
I'm goin' lay round that shack 'till the mail train comes back
I'll be rolling in my sweet baby's arms
Mama, nail my shoes to the kitchen flo'
Mama, nail my shoes to the kitchen flo'
When that engine pass the do' I won't go to work no mo'
Mama, nail my shoes to the kitchen flo'

From Guy Davis Legacy © 2004 Red House Records, Inc.
Arkansas History Timeline in Living Pictures

Living Pictures: A Theatrical Technique for Learning

In the theater, tableau means a stage picture made of silent actors holding their bodies still to show a moment in time. Tableaus tell a story about an event, people or a place. Tableau actors might re-create a famous historical scene. Teachers help students create tableaus by directing, encouraging and applying the tableau process to history.

Actors use three tools: Body, Voice and Imagination
Actors practice two skills: Concentration and Cooperation

Students freeze their bodies in position and lock eyes to concentrate on a focus point. Voices are silent. Tableaus are organized with visually interesting balance and levels. Students build skills in noticing, experiencing and learning in tableaus.

Use tableau skills to build 6 “living pictures.”

> Practice warming up the actor’s tools, and practice the skills.
> Select a topic and decide what will be depicted in the tableau.
> Ask students to select the parts (people, objects or environment) they will show.
> Help students to appropriate locations and levels for the picture.
> Call “1 – 2 – 3 – Freeze!” and students freeze to form the tableau.
> Hold for 10 to 15 seconds and then provide feedback.
> Repeat and invite two or three students to step out and assess if the tableau is telling the story.
> Call “rest your bodies” or “curtain” to conclude the tableau.
> Return to the classroom setting and ask students to reflect on their experience with questions like:
  1. What did you notice being in a tableau?
  2. What did you learn about the person or thing you portrayed?
  3. What was interesting in the tableau?
  4. Was there something you didn’t understand in the tableau?
  5. What did you learn about the historical event?
  6. How can the tableau be improved?

Adapted from Sean Layne and his Living Pictures instruction, The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. Video available at: www.kennedy-center.org/pdot

Activity

Build a timeline of Arkansas history living pictures
Create tableaus that depict the following events in Arkansas history:

1. 1803 Louisiana Purchase: struggle between native inhabitants and settlers
2. 1830 Cotton Industry struggle between slaves and plantation owners
3. 1863 Civil War: struggle between free and confederate Arkansans
4. 1927 Mississippi Flood: struggle between the river and people
5. 1942 World War II: struggle between Arkansans and Japanese Americans in internment centers
6. 1957 Civil Rights: struggle between Governor Faubus and President Eisenhower

Use tableau skills to build 6 “living pictures.”

> Select a title for the timeline.
> Select lyrics or musical phrases from a blues song to support a transition from picture to picture.
> Rehearse each picture and transition.
> Rehearse the final picture. End with a repetition of the title of the timeline.

> Arkansas Learning Standards

PPE 1.2. Identify and discuss various racial/ethnic groups and cultures in historical and contemporary Arkansas through writing, literature, and fine arts.
SSPS.1.3. Communicate knowledge and ideas in a variety of forms, such as reports, persuasive statements, journals, graphic displays, speeches, and cultural storytelling.
SSPS.1.4. Recognize and discuss different perspectives in current and past issues in Arkansas.
A Timeline of Arkansas and Blues History

1803
The land between the Mississippi River and Rocky Mountains, including what would become Arkansas, is sold to the United States.

1830
Storytelling and "Arkansas Traveler," played on fiddle and banjo are entertainments in the early settlements in Arkansas territory.

1836
Arkansas becomes the twenty-fifth state on June 15, 1836.

1861
Arkansas votes to secede from the Union. Civil War battles occur in Pea Ridge, Prairie Grove and other Arkansas towns.

1871
Reconstruction in the south and creation of an education system in Arkansas, including the University of Arkansas.

1914
W. C. Handy composes The St. Louis Blues on Beale Street, Memphis

1927
Mississippi River floods half of Arkansas’ crop land. A period of hard times for farmers.

1931
Adolph Rickenbacker invents the electric guitar.

1936
Robert Johnson writes “Terraplane Blues” – Arkansas celebrates 100 years of statehood – Bentonville aviatrix Louise Thadden wins a transcontinental air race.

1942
Japanese Americans relocated to Rohwer and Jerome Internment Camps.

1945
King Biscuit Time carried by KFFA in Helena, gave Arkansas blues musicians a chance to express their musical style.

1952
Guy Davis was born in New York City, learns storytelling and musical traditions shared by grandparents, teachers and artists.

1957

1970
New faces in Arkansas politics include Dale Bumpers, David Pryor and Bill Clinton.

1986 & 1990
Maya Angelou and Miller Williams write poetry for the presidential inauguration of William Jefferson Clinton.

1995

2007
Marks the 50th year of desegregation at Little Rock Central High.

Celebrate Black History with Guy Davis

Blues Journey with Guy Davis is underwritten by Hershey and Denise Garner

Students will learn how the stories and music of the blues are an extension of the African American oral tradition. Storytelling and the blues have deep connections to the history of Arkansas, showing how traditions help people maintain continuity and ties with the past. Experience and identify significant contributions made by great African American artists in art and culture. Blues music is a primary source for student learning in African American history and Arkansas history.
Delta Blues Style

Delta Blues is the style originating in the Mississippi delta. Its sound is a heavy, repeated bass line, slide guitar and emotional vocals. A vocalist can “sing the blues” with accompaniment from guitar, banjo, harmonica, bass or piano.

Guitar – the sweeping, whining, stinging sound of slide guitar is a distinctive characteristic of blues. The guitarist slides a metal or glass cylinder along the guitar strings to produce the gliding effect between notes while the right hand picks or strums the strings. Famous Slide guitarists include: Robert Johnson, Son House and Muddy Waters. Modern slide guitar players include Bonnie Raitt and Ry Cooder.

Voice – Blues singers can sound weary, soulful or inspired. Call and response is present in the blues. The vocalist sings a line and is answered by another instrument. Joyful shouts or other vocalizations accent the lyrics. Blues singers use short phrases, vocal pauses, repetition and sensory images to make the song expressive. Singers describe distress truthfully so that listeners feel better. Ma Rainey, Bessie Smith, Billie Holiday and Alberta Hunter are classic blues singers.

Bass – the steady beat of the bass line echoes the roots of the work song in blues. Physical activity in work gave blues its rhythm. A steady beat helps workers complete the task. Blues has a few basic rules, yet allows great freedom for improvisation and variation. The legacy of the blues is a rich area for continued research and inquiry.

Writing Prompts

Listen to blues music and write about how traditions help people maintain ties with the past.

> How did the blues get its name?
> Why does the blues reflect the social, economic or political conditions of a people?
> What contributions have blues artists made in Arkansas culture and economy?
> Blues music has a unique sound and emphasis that reflects conditions and perspectives of African American society in Arkansas.
> How has the blues expressed changes in the life and times of Arkansas’ working class?
> What have you noticed about people and environments from the blues?
> Write a story about the contribution of Arkansans like Scott Joplin in the 1900’s.
> Identify blues lyrics that might describe social effects of the 1927 flood in Arkansas.
> Examine the Civil Rights movement in Arkansas using blues lyrics as primary sources.

> Arkansas Learning Standards
W.7.AH/7-8.1; GD.8.AH.7-8.1; WWP.9AH.7-8.4 and WWPAH.7-8.12

Blues Instruments

Guitar, banjo and harmonica are instruments used to play blues music. Blues musicians chose them because they could be carried from place to place.

> Banjo and guitar are stringed instruments that play rhythm or melody. The earliest banjos were brought to America by African slaves.
> Harmonica or mouth organ is a small wind instrument with reeds mounted in narrow channels, side by side in a rectangular case. Sound is made by breathing in and out through the channels. Charlie Musselwhite and “Sonny Boy” Williamson have developed expressive blues styles.
> Guy Davis plays guitar, banjo, harmonica and sings.
Arkansas Heritage:
- www.arkansasheritage.org
- www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net
- www.naturalheritage.com
- www.deltaculturalcenter.com
  (Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism)
- www.arkansas.com
  (Arkansas Secretary of State – Communications and Education)
- www.sosweb.state.ar.us/about_ark
  (Find answers to your questions about Arkansas history, state symbols and state songs)

Civil War in Arkansas
- www.nps.gov/peri
  (Pea Ridge National Military Park)
- www.arkansasstateparks.com/prairiegrovebattlefield
  (Prairie Grove Battlefield State Park)
- www.washcohistorical society.org
- www.civilwarbuff.org
- www.arkansasheritage.org/education-information/educators/civil_war.asp
- www.cr.nps.gov/NR/TWHP/wwwlps/lessons/70prairie/70prairie.htm

Arkansas History:
- www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net
- libinfo.uark.edu/SpecialCollections/pryorcenter

Museums:
- www.historicarkansas.org
- www.springdaleark.org/shiloh
- www.rogersarkansas.com/museum
- www.oldstatehouse.org
- www.arkansashistory.com

Academic and Research Network
- http://www.arknet.edu/index.html
- http://encyclopediaofarkansas.net
- http://www.ark-ives.com
  (Arkansas History Commission)

Blues Music
- www.guydavis.com
- www.bluesaccess.com
- www.livingblues.com
- www.ezfolk.com
- www.tradmusic.com
- www.waltonartscenter.org

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