

Memphis Music Initiative
Memphis, TN, 3-18-21
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Memphis Students Receive HBCU Music Scholarship Offers in Virtual Auditions Hosted by Memphis Music Initiative

On Saturday, March 13, Memphis Music Initiative (MMI), in partnership with six Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), hosted a day of virtual music auditions for musically gifted high school students from 12 school music programs across Memphis.

Over the course of one day, band and choral directors representing Rust College, Jackson State University, Tennessee State University, Fisk University, LeMoyne-Owen College, and University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff heard vocal and instrumental performances from 24 student musicians. And Memphis' young people brought their A-game; **all 24 students received scholarship offers** (partial or full) this weekend, with more offers likely to come as institutions continue their scholarship decision-making process. Seven of those students auditioned with instrumental pieces; 17 auditioned with vocal performances. Students participated from high schools across the city including Whitehaven High School, Memphis Business Academy, the Soulsville Charter School, and Overton High School, just to name a few.

To prepare for the event, MMI staff coordinated with school partners, local music instructors, MMI Fellows, HBCU music directors, parents, and students to make the day a resounding success. Our music engagement Fellows, who are world-class musicians in their own right, tirelessly advocated for and encouraged students to dream big and hone their crafts—not only in preparation for this event, but throughout the school year and in the midst of a pandemic. Of course, the day belonged to the students, who showed up, showed out, and demonstrated once again what makes Memphis music highly sought-after across the country.

"I had the great pleasure of working with incredibly focused young people in preparation for the HBCU auditions," said MMI Fellow Marcus King, who works with choir students at Ridgeway High School. "I met with each student each week for thirty-minute sessions, sometimes twice a week. I had to convince some to audition due to pandemic fatigue and senses of hopelessness. Fortunately, they agreed to see this through to the end. We worked on diction, breathe support, musicianship, and artistry. I'm so proud of all of them and wish them the very best of futures."

Memphis is a city with an incomparably rich musical heritage. MMI was thrilled to be a conduit to connect the artistic genius of our young Memphians to the world of opportunities represented through our HBCU partners.

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"HBCUs have been a critical highway to economic success, personal growth, artistic development, and knowledge building with our young people," said Amber Hamilton, Executive Director, MMI. "They continue to be an engine for Black economic progress, social justice movements, and Black art. Many of Memphis' talented young people attend storied HBCUs across the country, where they are honing their academic and creative skills in a space that allows their cultural identity to flourish—all while bringing with them their unique perspective as Memphians."

MMI leverages targeted philanthropic investments, programmatic offerings, and strategic capacity building to strengthen youth, community arts, and music engagement activities for primarily black and Latino youth in communities across Memphis and the Mid-South. MMI invests in two ways: through direct programs that connect youth to high-quality in-school, after-school and summertime opportunities, and by providing funding and resources to advance organizations working with young people.

In addition to operating direct programs that expand access to music engagement opportunities for black and brown youth, MMI also supports the ecosystem of community organizations that work to extend music and arts engagement opportunities for black and brown youth. Their supports enhance the capability of nonprofit organizations to deliver programs and to secure funding/resources beyond those provided by MMI, so that youth always have access to high-quality music programming.

For more information on how we are impacting youth, through transformative music engagement, visit our website at <http://memphismusicinitiative.org/> or find us Social Media: Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter @mmusinitiative.