



The Dayton Funk Legacy

Performance Guide

Discover the electrifying history of Dayton funk music, a youth-driven cultural phenomenon that shaped a generation. This interactive performance explores iconic Dayton funk songs, influential artists and the “Four Funky Fundamentals” of groove, imagination, identity and futurism. This experience combines storytelling, live music and audience participation to inspire a new appreciation for Dayton’s musical legacy and the power of collective creativity!

This performance guide includes:

- Artist bios
- A warmup activity
- Pre-show thinking prompt
- Key vocabulary & context
- Suggested Q & A questions
- Post-show discussion questions
- A student survey link
- Post-show activities
- Related Ohio Learning Standards

BEFORE THE SHOW

Meet the Funkologists



Dayton native **LaFrae Sci** is an internationally acclaimed multi-instrumentalist, educator, composer and electro-acoustic adventurer. As a composer, she writes for film, theater, and large and extended jazz and classical orchestras. LaFrae also leads Willie Mae Future Sounds, a STEAM based, year-round music empowerment program named after Willie Mae "Big Mama" Thornton for girls and gender non-conforming youth in New York City.

Deron Bell is a music director, recording artist, co-leader of the Dayton Funk All-Stars Band and restorative practices-licensed practitioner. Deron has shared the stage with over 30 nationally known recording artists such as Kirk Whalum, Zapp with Shirley Murdock, and Bootsy Collins. He is also the music director for the internationally recognized Dayton Contemporary Dance Company. Deron uses music and music technology as tools in the classroom to build positive classroom cultures creatively.



Classroom Warmup: A Fantastic Voyage

Groove to classic Dayton funk beats with the **Dayton Funk Mixtape** on [YouTube](#) or [Spotify](#). As you listen, record your impressions of the music by drawing or writing in a journal or a blank piece of paper.

- *How does funk make you feel?*
- *What adjectives would you use to describe the music?*
- *What part of the music stands out in your mind the most? Why?*

Share your impressions with a classmate or in a whole-class discussion.

Think While You Watch

Dayton Funk was a **youth driven movement**: Teenagers living on the West Side of Dayton created music in their garages and basements, perfected their unique sounds in competitive high school Battles of the Bands, and often played in nightclubs, community centers, and on local radio before hitting it big. **What platforms and resources do you have to make and share music today?**

The Funky Fundamentals

- **Groove** – Being “on the one,” relaxed, connected
- **Identity** – Finding one’s voice, defining space with sound and vision
- **Imagination** – Pushing the boundaries of what is possible
- **Futurism** – Forward thinking vision

Dayton Funk Legends

Dayton was a hotbed for funk in the 1970s and 1980s, with homegrown acts including The Ohio Players, Zapp, Lakeside, Slave, Faze-O, Heatwave and Sun topping the national charts. Here are three funk acts you’ll hear more about in the show:

The Ohio Players started in 1959 as the Ohio Untouchables by Robert Ward, Marshall Jones, Clarence Satchell, Cornelius Johnson and Ralph Middlebrooks, and went on to include Gary Webster, Leroy Bonner, Bruce Napier, Marvin Pierce, Walter Morrison, Billy Beck and James “Diamond” Williams. Their career produced 14 Top 20 hits, with six No. 1 songs, and two No. 1 pop albums, 14 gold and platinum records with three consecutive platinum albums. Hits include: “Fire,” “Love Rollercoaster,” “I Wanna Be Free,” and “Funky Worm.”



The Ohio Players

Zapp was formed in 1977 by brothers Roger, Lester, Larry and Tony Troutman. **Roger Troutman** was known for his innovative use of a vocoder “talk box” to create computerized vocals. Zapp hits include “More Bounce to the Ounce,” “Computer Love” and “Do Wah Ditty” while Roger went on to find solo success with songs like “California Love” with Tupac.



Zapp





Lakeside

Lakeside formed around 1970 with members Otis Stokes, Fred Alexander, Jr., Thomas Shelby, Steve Shockley, Mark Wood, Tiemeyer McCain, Norman Beavers, Marvin Craig and Fred Lewis. Their biggest hit, “Fantastic Voyage,” was later remade by Coolio.

They were known for wearing elaborate outfits on stage and on their album covers.



Sources:

- SoulTracks. <https://soultracks.com>
- “8 legendary acts that make Dayton the ‘Land of Funk’” by Greg Lynch, *Dayton Daily News*, January 31, 2024

Dayton Funk Essentials

- Dayton bands were responsible for 110 charting Billboard rhythm and blues singles between 1972-1988 – a feat that remains unmatched by any other American city.
- Lakeside named themselves after a popular amusement park on Dayton’s West Side, the Lakeside Palladium.
- Chaminade Julienne alumni Keith and Johnny Wilder formed Heatwave while in London, with English musician Rod Temperton, who went on to write “Off the Wall,” “Rock with You” and “Thriller” for Michael Jackson.
- Tupac Shakur and Roger Troutman’s collaboration “California Love” became the biggest selling single for both artists and is rated #51 on VH1’s “Greatest Rap Songs of All Time.”

Excerpted from: [“Boogie Nights: A Brief History of Dayton’s Funk Legacy,”](#) by Basim Blunt, *Dayton City Paper*, October 16-22, 2012

The Q & A

Artists love to answer thoughtful questions! If you are having trouble thinking of a question, here are some that the artists would love to answer for you.

- Which is your favorite Dayton Funk band?
- Why is funk music important to Dayton?
- What drew you to this art form?
- What kind of training/education did you complete?
- What advice would you have for someone wanting to follow in your footsteps?

AFTER THE SHOW

Post-Show Discussion

Discuss as a class or with a partner:

- What moments stood out to you from the performance, and why?
- How did the performers use music to tell a story or build emotion?
- What connections can you make between music and your life or community?
- What more do you want to know about Dayton Funk or local music history? Where you can look for this information?

Student Survey

Tell us about your experience at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/BJPMLRY>

Funky Futures: Talkbox vs. AI



Watch [this short interview](#) (3:33) with Roger Troutman on the music video show Video Soul from 1987.

As you watch, write down 3 things you notice about how Roger used his body or voice to produce the talkbox sound.

Complete this chart:

	Talkbox	AI
Who controls the sound?		
What feels human about it?		
What feels machine-like?		
How might audiences react?		

Finally, write a short paragraph that finishes one of these thoughts:

- “Technology helps artists express themselves when...”
- “If Roger Troutman used AI today, I think his music would...”

FOR TEACHERS

Related Ohio Learning Standards

The following standards are linked to the artist’s performance and/or the activities in the performance guide. Teachers may be able to make additional connections.

Music

Connecting (CO)	
6.2CO	Attend and critique live music performances and demonstrate appropriate audience behavior for the context and style of music performed.
6.4CO	Identify how music is important in everyday life.
6.7CO	Identify different functions and uses of music in American and other cultures.
7.7CO	Recognize and identify historical and cultural contexts (time and place of a music event) that have influenced music.
8.4CO	Discuss the purpose and value of music in various cultures and settings.

Responding (RE)	
6.1RE	Identify the major periods, genres, and composers in the development of music of various cultures.
6.3RE	Distinguish the use of dynamics, meter, tempo, and tonality in various pieces through active listening.
6.7RE	Compare and discuss the musical traditions of various cultures.
7.1RE	Identify aurally the style and historical period of various music examples.
8.1RE	Examine contemporary music styles and describe the distinctive characteristics in a repertoire of exemplary works.
HSP.7RE	Discuss how people differ in their responses to musical experiences based on culture, environment, values, and personal experiences.

Writing

CCR Anchor Standard 1	Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
CCR Anchor Standard 2	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.
CCR Anchor Standard 4	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

CCR Anchor Standard 10	Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.
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Speaking and Listening

CCR Anchor Standard 1	Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
CCR Anchor Standard 2	Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.
CCR Anchor Standard 3	Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric.

Social and Emotional Learning

Self-Awareness	A4: Demonstrate a sense of personal responsibility, confidence, and advocacy
Relationship Skills	D1: Apply positive verbal and non-verbal communication and social skills to interact effectively with others and in groups D2: Develop and maintain positive relationships
Responsible Decision-making	E4: Explore and approach new situations with an open mind and curiosity while recognizing that some outcomes are not certain or comfortable