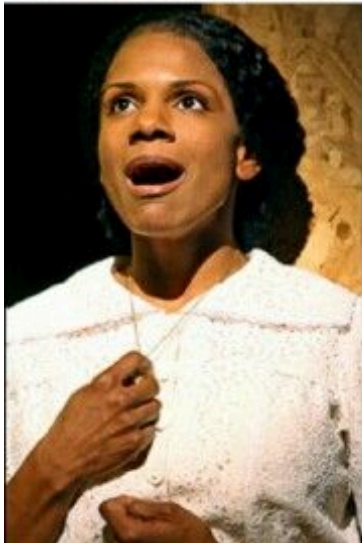


AUDRA McDONALD

Musical Theatre Singer and Actor

Born July 3, 1970





Fun Facts

- Audra McDonald was born in Berlin, Germany and raised in Fresno, California.
- At age 9, she started taking voice lessons and performing at a local dinner theatre.
- In 1988, She graduated from Theodore Roosevelt High School in Fresno and went on to study classical singing at The Juilliard School in New York City, graduating in 1993.
- One year after graduating, she earned a Tony Award for her role in the musical *Carousel*.
- By age 28, she had earned 3 Tony Awards, becoming the youngest actress ever to do so.
- Today, Audra McDonald has 6 Tony Awards and is the only performer to have earned awards in each of the four main acting categories (Best Performance by a Leading Actress in a Play, Best Performance by a Featured Actress in a Play, Best Performance by a Leading Actress in a Musical, and Best Performance by a Featured Actress in a Musical.)
- In 2015, She was named one of Time magazine's most influential people.
- Outside of performing, She is a passionate advocate for equal rights and homeless youth.

Suggested Listening Selections:

- **Somewhere over the rainbow:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4J5gXGIkC3g>
 - Audra McDonald sings *Somewhere Over the Rainbow* from *The Wizard of Oz*. Listen to how she collaborates with the guitarist to create her own unique version of this very popular song.
- **Summertime:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k3oRiKA587o>
 - Audra McDonald sings *Summertime* from *Porgy and Bess*. Listen for the way she is able to use good breath control and vocal technique to demonstrate how powerful her voice is.
- **The stars and the moon:** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j5Z_BpYCLqU
 - Audra McDonald sings *The Stars and the Moon* from *Songs for a New World*. Listen to the way she is able to tell a story through song.
- **Maybe this time:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zGROi4dwqU8>
 - Audra McDonald sings *Maybe This Time* from *Cabaret*. Listen for the way she is able to show us how her character's emotional journey from the beginning of the song to the end.
- **Crazy he calls me:** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TZTwdR3C6_E
 - Audra McDonald performs as real-life singer Billie Holiday in *Lady Day at Emerson's Bar & Grill*. Listen for how she is able to change her voice to take on the very unique characteristics of the real person that she is portraying. How is her voice different in this recording than it is in the previous ones we've listened to?

Suggested Lesson Activities:

Grades K-2:

1. *Objective: SWBAT explore different musical ideas by experimenting with the voice*
 - a. *Select a song and call/response that students in class are already familiar with*
 - b. *Explore different emotional/physical interpretations of that song as an ensemble: sad, happy, angry, surprised, tired, etc.*
 - c. *Closing Prompt: how can we use our voices to express emotions?*
2. *Objective: SWBAT demonstrate active listening as an audience member*
 - a. *Select one of the links from above (Recommended: Somewhere Over the Rainbow)*
 - b. *Before playing the selection, identify what it means to be a good audience member and 1-3 specific moments in the song to listen for (e.g. Listen for what Audra's voice does whenever she sings the word "Rainbow")*
 - c. *Practice listening to/watching the performance using good audience behaviors and reflect as a class at the end.*
3. *Objective: SWBAT identify different genres and styles of music*
 - a. *Select short (10-20 second) clips from three of the selections above (Recommended: Summertime, Stars and the Moon, and Crazy He Calls Me)*
 - b. *Allow students to "dance" or otherwise physically experience each song in their spaces*
 - c. *Prompts: How did each song make you feel? What was similar about them? What was different?*

Grades 3-5:

1. *Objective: SWBAT identify how the elements of music (e.g., tempo, dynamics) can be used to support the artist's purpose*
 - a. *Select one to three of the selections above (Recommended: Summertime, Stars and the Moon, and Crazy He Calls Me)*
 - b. *For each selection, ask students to identify tempo, dynamics, and any specific vocal choices that Audra McDonald makes to help “tell the story”*
 - c. *Pair and Share to discuss as a group*
2. *Objective: SWBAT describe and demonstrate one’s personal musical style and preferences*
 - a. *Select one to three of the selections above (Recommended: Summertime, Stars and the Moon, and Crazy He Calls Me)*
 - b. *Divide class into groups of 3-4 and use a story circle protocol (give each student in circle equal time to respond, uninterrupted, before moving to the next student) to reflect on the following prompt: which selection did you most “connect” to, and why?*
 - c. *Allow the story circle to cycle through so that every student has equal time/opportunity to share.*
3. *Objective: SWBAT analyze how an artwork's form (e.g., use of repetition, contrasting patterns, phrases, and themes) supports the composer's intention.*
 - a. *Listen or watch Maybe This Time from the selections above in class*
 - b. *Ask students to identify any patterns or moments where musical phrases, words, or motifs are repeated*
 - c. *In theatre, the rule of repetition tells us that any time something is repeated, it must be done so with more energy, urgency, or intensity. Can we find examples of that in Audra’s performance?*

Grades 6-12:

1. *Objective: SWBAT explore genre through connecting musical theatre to their own lives with an activity called “My Own Musical”*
 - a. *Divide students into pairs or groups of three*
 - b. *In each group, each student will answer the following prompts and use their partners to help develop their idea.*
 - c. *Prompt: If your life was a musical, what would be it’s 1) Title, 2) Genre (i.e. action, fantasy, sci-fi, mystery, etc.) and 3) Name of one of its show-stopping musical numbers.*
 - d. *When every student has created their musical, each group will present their 2-3 ideas as if they were a creative team “pitching” their musical to the rest of the class.*
2. *Objective: SWBAT analyze artistic intent and motivation in an activity called “What Makes You Sing”*
 - a. *Optional: begin by showing the recording of Audra singing Maybe This Time*
 - b. *Hand students ¼ size pieces of paper or large-sized post-in notes for this writing prompt*
 - c. *Let students know that they will be asked to share their answers with the class, so to only write something that they are comfortable sharing*
 - d. *Provide the following writing prompt: **In musical theatre, characters “break into song” because what they are feeling is so strong that it must be expressed musically. Describe a moment in your life when you felt so strongly about something that you could have broken into song. How would you describe the song’s tempo, dynamics, etc?***
 - e. *Share responses in class.*

3. *Objective: SWBAT connect contemporary issues in musical theatre to broader dialogue about cultural representation*

a. *Discussion Prompt: Audra McDonald, a woman of color, is known to have portrayed many characters that were historically portrayed as white. This provides a positive example of casting that “transcends race.” Should **any** actor be able to play **any** character in musical theatre? Why, or why not?*

b. *Distribute the article on Color-conscious casting (provided in Additional Resources) and use a jigsaw protocol to discuss in class.*

Additional Resources

- 60 Minutes Interview with Audra McDonald: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zTpHJivc9V4>
- Audra McDonald Official Website and Biography: <https://audramcdonald.com/bio/>
- Color-Conscious Casting Article from Penn State:
<https://sites.psu.edu/cragercivicissue/2017/02/01/color-conscious-casting/#targetText=The%20practice%20of%20color%2Dconscious,the%20cultural%20intricacies%20at%20play>
- Jigsaw Protocol: <https://www.sps186.org/downloads/blurbs/54806/Jigsaw%20Protocol.pdf>

Musician's Identity Tags: American (U.S.), African-American, Female, Singer, Actor, Musical Theatre

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