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## Historic Fisk Jubilee Singers Perform at National Gallery of Art in Recognition of Martin Luther King Jr. Federal Holiday



The historic vocal ensemble Fisk Jubilee Singers will perform in the West Building, West Garden Court, on January 17, 2016, in recognition of the Martin Luther King Jr. federal holiday.

Washington, DC—The historic vocal ensemble Fisk Jubilee Singers will perform a free concert on Sunday, January 17, 2016, at 3:30 p.m. in the West Garden Court of the National Gallery of Art, the eve of the Martin Luther King Jr. federal holiday. Members of the Fisk Jubilee Singers, an African American *a cappella* group, are students at Fisk University in Nashville, TN. The group performs Negro spirituals that were originally sung by slaves prior to the Civil War. The first group of singers, organized in 1871, arranged the music and toured to raise funds for their financially troubled school by giving concerts. They introduced the public to the power of spirituals, the religious anthems of those living in slavery—a genre that remains a vibrant musical tradition today.

### Background

On November 16, 1871, a group of unknown singers—all but two who were former slaves, and many still in their teens—arrived at Oberlin College in Ohio to perform before a national convention of ministers. After a few standard ballads, the chorus sang spirituals and other songs associated with slavery. It was one of the first public performances of the “secret music” African Americans had sung in the fields and behind closed doors for generations. The Fisk Jubilee Singers continue the tradition of singing the Negro spiritual around the world, allowing them to share the rich culture globally while preserving this unique music.

### Awards and Honors

The Fisk Jubilee Singers continue to thrive as a vocal ensemble today. Among their many awards and achievements are two Grammy nominations; the [National Medal of Arts](#), the nation's highest honor for artists and patrons of the arts, presented by President George W. Bush and first lady Laura Bush during a ceremony at the White House; [Music City Walk of Fame](#); Dove Award for *Poor Man Lazarus* in the CD [In Bright Mansions](#); induction into the Gospel Music Hall of Fame; Presidential Lifetime Achievement Award presented by the National Arts Club of New York; the Governor's Award; the Recording Academy Honors; and the Heritage Award of the Nashville Music Awards.

In 1999, the Fisk Jubilee Singers were featured in *Jubilee Singers: Sacrifice and Glory*, an award-winning PBS program. In 2002, the [Library of Congress](#) added the choral ensemble's 1909 recording of "[Swing Low, Sweet Chariot](#)" to the [United States National Recording Registry](#). By a special invitation from the U.S. Department of State in 2007, the Fisk Jubilee Singers participated in the celebration of the 50th Independence Anniversary of Ghanaians. This historic journey became known as “A Sacred Journey.”

In February 1978, the Fisk campus was designated as a National Historic District in recognition of its architectural, historic, and cultural significance.

### Concert Information

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Concerts at the National Gallery of Art are free of charge and open to the public on a first-come, first-seated basis. Seating begins 30 minutes prior to the concert. Sunday concerts begin at 3:30 p.m. in the West Building's West Garden Court unless indicated otherwise. The entrance to the West Building is located at Sixth Street and Constitution Avenue NW, and the East Building entrance is at Fourth Street and Pennsylvania Avenue NW. Monthly listings of concert programs may be obtained by calling (202) 842-6941 or by visiting the Gallery's website at [www.nga.gov/programs/music.htm](http://www.nga.gov/programs/music.htm).

## General Information

The National Gallery of Art and its Sculpture Garden are at all times free to the public. They are located on the National Mall between 3rd and 9th Streets at Constitution Avenue NW, and are open Monday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The Gallery is closed on December 25 and January 1. For information call (202) 737-4215 or visit the Gallery's Web site at [www.nga.gov](http://www.nga.gov). Follow the Gallery on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt](http://www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt), Twitter at [www.twitter.com/ngadc](http://www.twitter.com/ngadc), and Instagram at <http://instagram.com/ngadc>.

Visitors will be asked to present all carried items for inspection upon entering. Checkrooms are free of charge and located at each entrance. Luggage and other oversized bags must be presented at the 4th Street entrances to the East or West Building to permit x-ray screening and must be deposited in the checkrooms at those entrances. For the safety of visitors and the works of art, nothing may be carried into the Gallery on a visitor's back. Any bag or other items that cannot be carried reasonably and safely in some other manner must be left in the checkrooms. Items larger than 17 by 26 inches cannot be accepted by the Gallery or its checkrooms.

For additional press information please call or send inquiries to:

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