



*HISTORY AND IMPROVISATION: MAKING AMERICAN MUSIC* EDUCATION GUIDE

Worksheet #1: Musical History

Study the lyrics to the song, "Julie," and then answer the following questions.

1. What happens in the song?
2. What are the two opposing points of view in the song?
3. How do the two women address each other? What does that tell us about their relationship?
4. How did the mistresses' beliefs allow her to justify owning Julie as a slave?
5. What kind of home did the mistress actually provide for Julie?
6. How does the historical moment portrayed allow Julie to finally speak? (What changed in America?)
7. Rhiannon Giddens says, "American history's not all bad and it's not all good. You know, it's a mixture of things, and that's what minstrelsy is." She also says of the 19th century, "It's a problematic time period for us to look back on, because we have not a very good way of talking about race in this country. We're not very good at it." Do you think Giddens' song gives us a helpful way of talking about race? If so, in what way?
8. Why do you think it is important to Giddens to tell the story of "Julie"? Who does Julie represent?