



# NEWS RELEASE

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## **BCPS, Creative Alliance performance series to continue with bluesman Jontavious Willis** *Virtual performance to be broadcast on Jan. 20*

TOWSON, MD. – Young bluesman [Jontavious Willis](#) will join with Baltimore County Public Schools students on Wednesday, Jan. 20. Details about how to access the virtual performance will be available soon.

The musician will be featured as part of the new Homefront: World Culture in Context initiative. This unique program connects students to renowned artists from across the globe performing in the places that have profoundly informed their work, accompanied by virtual, live conversations about creativity, belonging, and culture. The series was launched in November by the BCPS Office of Social Studies and Department of Career and Technical Education and Fine Arts and the Baltimore-based [Creative Alliance](#).

Willis, a native of Greenville, Ga., is a 24-year-old master of the acoustic blues. He was nominated for a [GRAMMY](#) in 2020 for his second album, “Spectacular Class,” produced by GRAMMY award-winning artists Taj Mahal and Keb’ Mo’.

Demonstrating a talent and passion for music at an early age, Willis grew up singing gospel music at Mount Pilgrim Baptist Church with his grandfather. At the age of 14, he came across a YouTube video of Muddy Waters playing “Hoochie Coochie Man” and was instantly hooked on the blues.

Willis has said, “To me the blues is the most important musical genre and the roots of many others. Deeper than that, it is a cultural thing for me and my heritage. I feel when I play the blues, I am connecting with those before me and presenting it to others, a spiritual type thing.... In some aspects, the same problems of those days are still occurring. Out of all the current music, I connect with the blues the best. The same blues songs of the Jim Crow era can still be sung today. The songs about getting mistreated and abused are still fights we battle daily.”

The [first Homefront performance](#), which aired live on Nov. 18 and is available online for viewing, showcased [Bady-Dorzhu Ondar](#), perhaps the world’s foremost master of Tuvan “throat singing,” broadcasting from Russia, and interviewed by Baltimore-based beat boxer and vocal artist [Shodekeh](#). During the performance, the artists showcased their vocal styles, described their historical influences, discussed the function of throat singing and other musical forms in nomadic culture, and described how Tuvan music is reflective of the environment.

*(Editor’s note: Photos of Willis accompany this release.)*

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