

Eric Dozier



"I was surrounded by music," says Eric Dozier of his early years. He started learning the piano at his dad's side at age four. He sang and played the piano with his family at the local Baptist church in rural Tennessee, U.S. Singing was a way of life.

Eric grew passionate about how to create unified communities. He got a bachelor's degree in public policy and a master's degree in religion, then became a mentor for youth. In time, he focused on the role of music in society. He worked with the World Famous Harlem Gospel Choir and cofounded One Human Family Music Workshops.

Today, Eric uses music to bring people together and teach them about the oneness of humanity. He travels the globe leading choirs and empowering creativity. He also helps to create a diverse culture at the Episcopal School of Nashville, while completing a doctorate degree in black gospel performance. He and his family live in Tennessee.

Q: What's your favorite childhood memory?

A: We had a toy piano . . . and my dad would put this record on . . . "Broadway Boogie," and I would just bang on the piano . . . [Later] I remember my dad coming up the driveway with a real piano on the back of my grandfather's truck . . . He starts playing . . . and I was just amazed . . . so I sat up next to him and watched his hands, and that's how I learned how to play.

Q: What was the most challenging experience for you as a kid?

A: My parents splitting up when I was about 12 . . . That was tough for me, had a really big impact on my life . . . I was also about to start a new school . . . That was a big time of transition.

Q: What inspired you to become a music educator?

A: For me . . . music has always been a means of maintaining and carrying forward community . . . It was never . . . just a performance practice. It was always for a greater purpose . . . I've always kind of aspired that my music be useful . . . Music and vision . . . help the community to grow and mature spiritually.

Q: What motivated you to become a Bahá'í?

A: I grew up learning about the oneness of humanity . . . The hope for the realization of the oneness of humanity is embedded in black culture . . . in black music . . . in black spirituality . . . in every aspect of who we are . . . I was prepared to meet the Bahá'ís and the Bahá'í Faith by the vision that was planted inside of me because of my family . . . It was like, well, of course, this is what the world should be like.



Eric's whole family was musical, and at age 4, he'd already begun learning to play the piano by watching his dad.

Questions and

Answers with an

Inspirational Bahá'í

Q: This issue of *Brilliant Star* is about building unified communities. What are three things kids can do to help?

A: They need to understand how their communities operate . . . get involved . . . [Second,] use their imaginations, and don't believe that just because they don't see something in the world, that it can't be in the world. They . . . have great capacity to imagine a better world, and they also possess the energy to bring it into existence . . . And third . . . really cultivate a thirst for learning . . . realize that learning does not only come from books or computers . . . You don't just learn with your mind . . . You know through your senses . . . through your intuition, you learn through meditating . . . gardening . . . singing . . . dancing—all of these different things. Keep an open mind and understand that knowledge can come from a multiplicity of places . . .



Top: Eric leads the Victoria, Canada, chapter of the One Human Family Workshop Choir in February 2017. The choir has chapters around the U.S. and Canada.

Bottom: Singing is a joy that Eric shares with his wife, Genevieve, and daughters Worthington (left) and Justice, at a 2017 Bahá'í school in Wisconsin.

Q: The prejudice and disunity in the world can be discouraging. How do you stay optimistic?

A: We have to search for signs of light . . . There is a lot of beauty in the world, and there are a lot of people—and a lot of young people specifically—that are doing great things in the world . . . Search out these young people and use them as role models.

Q: You use the power of music to promote healing, justice, and racial reconciliation. How can music help us in these areas?

A: Music has always had a power to raise awareness about particular societal issues in a highly effective way, probably more so than any other art form . . . If you think about . . . group singing, we all have to be kind of pointed in the same direction for it to work . . . There's also . . . the lyrical content, particularly for singing about justice . . . That does have an impact on people's spirit . . . it really releases a force into the world.

Q: If you had one wish for *Brilliant Star's* readers, what would it be?

A: I will kind of take my experience with my [daughters] . . . What I really want for my children is I want them to see the world as their family and . . . their home . . . I want them to see themselves as . . . friends and family to the whole human race . . . That's my wish for . . . our young people, you know, because the world is theirs. It does belong to them.