

Grammy Award winner Rhiannon Giddens celebrates Black history and culture in her unflinching, uplifting, and gorgeously illustrated picture book debut.

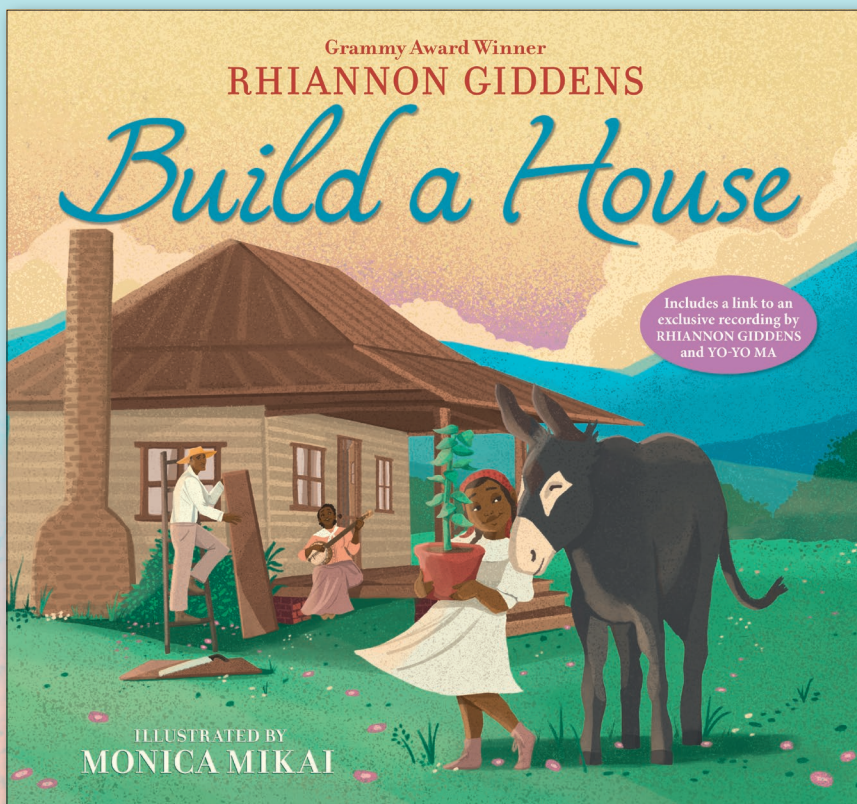
# Build a House

by RHIANNON GIDDENS

illustrated by  
MONICA MIKAI

*I learned your words and wrote my song. I put my story down.*

As an acclaimed musician, singer, songwriter, and cofounder of the traditional African American string band the Carolina Chocolate Drops, Rhiannon Giddens has long used her art to mine America's musical past and manifest its future, passionately recovering lost voices and reconstructing a nation's musical heritage. Written as a song to commemorate the 155th anniversary of Juneteenth—which was originally performed with famed cellist Yo-Yo Ma—and paired here with bold illustrations by painter Monica Mikai, *Build a House* tells the moving story of a people who would not be moved and the music that sustained them. Steeped in sorrow and joy, resilience and resolve, turmoil and transcendence, this dramatic debut offers a proud view of history and a vital message for readers of all ages: honor your heritage, express your truth, and let your voice soar, even—or perhaps especially—when your heart is heaviest.



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HC: 978-1-5362-2252-4 • \$17.99 (\$23.99 CAN)

Ages 7–10 • 40 pages

Also available as an e-book



Photo by Ebu Yildiz

**RHIANNON GIDDENS** cofounded the Grammy Award-winning Carolina Chocolate Drops and the Black female supergroup Our Native Daughters. She is the recipient of a 2022 Grammy Award for Best Folk Album for her collaboration with Francesco Turrisi on *They're Calling Me Home*, and she has been nominated for additional Grammys as a soloist and collaborator. A musician, singer, songwriter, actor, librettist, and MacArthur Fellow, her many roles and honors include serving as artistic director at Silkroad and performing for the Obamas at the White House. Rhiannon Giddens lives in Ireland.



Monica Mikai lives in Atlanta, Georgia.

**MONICA MIKAI** is an author and illustrator who holds an MFA in painting from the New York Studio School. She is the illustrator of *The Proudest Color* by Sheila Modir and Jeffrey Kashou and *My Mother's Wildest Dreams* by John Light Jr. She is passionate about creating beautiful stories and illustrations that will inspire readers to see life from a new perspective.



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# A Note from Rhiannon Giddens

During the summer of 2020 I was struggling . . . not nearly as much as many people on planet Earth, but in my own small way I was at a complete artistic loss. I was locked down in Ireland while protests raged across the United States after the murder of George Floyd, and I felt furious, despairing, impotent. My entire career has pulled from the contentious, difficult, at times brutal, at times beautiful history of the United States, and when you live amongst the rhythms of history the first thing you see is the unending repetition of the same few patterns. I was seeing 1640, 1735, 1898, 1969 . . . and wondering if the character of the soft underbelly of this country, surrounded as it is by the technological and cultural innovations of the last few centuries, was ever going to change. I did what I do when I don't know where else to turn—I let the emotion and spirit and ancestral connection speak through me as best I could. “Build a House” was the result. Shortly after I wrote it, humanitarian and cellist Yo-Yo Ma reached out to see if I wanted to collaborate on a piece for Juneteenth, and we did a socially distanced duet of the song that made me feel that maybe I could still add something to the conversation, that even locked down in Ireland I could add something to the American story.



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