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# *A Musical Journey: From Jazz to Motown*



*Classroom photo by Rich Sofranko*

## **STUDY GUIDE**

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# **Artists on Tour**

# MUSICAL STYLES

P. Ann Everson-Price's *A Musical Journey: From Jazz to Motown* demonstrates a variety of musical styles, some of which are described below.

## BLUES

Blues is about tradition and personal expression. At its core, the blues has remained the same since its inception. Most blues feature simple, usually three-chord, progressions and have simple structures that are open to endless improvisations, both lyrical and musical. The blues grew out of African spirituals and worksongs. In the late 1800s, southern African Americans passed the songs down orally, and they collided with American folk and country from the Appalachians. New hybrids appeared in each region, but all of the recorded blues from the early 1900s are distinguished by simple, rural acoustic guitars and pianos. After World War II, the blues began to fragment, with some musicians holding on to acoustic traditions and others taking it to jazzier territory. However, most bluesmen followed Muddy Waters' lead and played the blues on electric instruments. From that point on, the blues continued to develop in new directions — particularly on electric instruments — or it has been preserved as an acoustic tradition.

## JAZZ

Jazz has been called America's classical music. Along with the blues, its forefather, it is one of the first truly indigenous music to develop in America, yet its unpredictable and risky ventures into improvisation gave it critical cache with scholars that the blues lacked. At the outset, jazz was dance music, performed by swinging big bands. Soon, the dance elements faded into the background and improvisation became the key element of the music. As the genre evolved, the music split into a number of different styles, from the speedy, hard-hitting rhythms of be-bop and the laid-back, mellow harmonies of cool jazz to the jittery, atonal forays of free jazz and the earthy grooves of soul jazz. What tied it all together was a foundation in the blues, a reliance on group interplay and unpredictable improvisation.


Dixieland, a style that overlaps with New Orleans jazz and classic jazz, has also been called "Chicago jazz" because it developed, to an extent, in Chicago in the 1920s. While New Orleans jazz has improvised ensembles, when jazz started becoming popular in the 1920s and demand was growing for larger dance bands, it became necessary for ensembles to be written down, particularly when a group included more than three or four horns.

### References

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*The Encyclopedia of Pop, Rock and Soul*, copyright 1974, 1977, 1989 by Irwin Stambler

AOL, AMG All Music Guide



Although swing largely began when Louis Armstrong joined Fletcher Henderson's Orchestra in 1924 and Don Redman began writing arrangements for the band that echoed the cornetist's relaxed phrases, the swing era officially started in 1935 when Benny Goodman's Orchestra caught on. Swing was a major force in American popular music until the big-band era largely ended in 1946.

Swing differs from New Orleans jazz and Dixieland in that the ensembles (even for small groups) are simpler and generally filled with repetitious riffs, while in contrast the solos are more sophisticated. Individual improvisations still paid close attention to the melody but due to the advance in musicianship, the solo flights were more adventurous.

The swing-oriented musicians who continued performing in the style after the end of the big band era (along with later generations who adopted this approach) were also playing "mainstream." The many stars of swing during the big band era included trumpeters Louis Armstrong, Bunny Berigan, Harry James, and Roy Eldridge; trombonists Tommy Dorsey and Jack Teagarden; clarinetists Benny Goodman and Artie Shaw; tenor saxophonists Coleman Hawkins, Lester Young, and Ben Webster; altoists Johnny Hodges and Benny Carter; pianists Teddy Wilson, Art Tatum, Earl Hines, Count Basie, and Nat King Cole; guitarist Charlie Christian; drummers Gene Krupa and Chick Webb; vibraphonist Lionel Hampton; bandleader Glenn Miller; and singers Billie Holiday, Ella Fitzgerald, and Jimmy Rushing.

## BOP

Also known as bebop, bop was a radical new music that developed gradually in the early 1940s and seemed to explode in 1945. The main difference between bop and swing is that the soloists engaged in chordal (rather than melodic) improvisation, often discarding the melody altogether after the first chorus and using the chords as the basis for the solo. Ensembles tended to be unisons, most jazz groups were under seven pieces and the soloist was free to be as adventurous as possible as long as the overall improvisation fit into the chord structure. Since the musicians were moving away from using the melodies as the basis for their solos (leading some listeners to ask "Where's the melody?"), the players were generally virtuosos and some of the tempos were very fast.

During the early years, bop divorced itself from popular music and a dancing audience, uplifting jazz to an art music but cutting deeply into its potential commercial success. Ironically, the once-radical bebop style has become the foundation for all of the innovations that followed and now can be almost thought of as establishment music. Among its key innovators were altoist Charlie Parker, trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie, pianist Bud Powell, drummer Max Roach and pianist-composer Thelonious Monk. Bop also mutated into swing-bop, which crossed the inventions of bop with a swinging Big Band, and Vocalese, which was a vocal interpretation of bop. Contemporary artists performing straight bop are often classified as Modern Bop.

## AFRO-CUBAN JAZZ


Afro-Cuban Jazz is a combination of jazz improvising and rhythms from Cuba and Africa; it is also known as Latin jazz. There were some hints of Afro-Cuban jazz in isolated cases during the 1920s and '30s — Jelly Roll Morton's "Spanish tinge" in some of his more rhythmic piano solos, a few Gene Krupa performances where he sought to include South American rhythms, and even in the Latin pop music of Xavier Cugat. However, the true birth of Afro-Cuban jazz can be traced to trumpeter-arranger Mario Bauza. Bauza introduced trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie to the masterful Cuban percussionist Chano Pozo (they teamed up in 1947-48 to create innovative music before Pozo's death) and also persuaded Latin bandleader Machito to use jazz soloists. During the late 1940s, Stan Kenton began to integrate Latin rhythms in his music, and with the rising popularity of Tito Puente and Cal Tjader during the 1950s, Afro-Cuban jazz caught on as one of the most popular jazz styles.

In more recent times some groups have developed Afro-Cuban jazz beyond its boppish roots, performing Thelonius Monk and John Coltrane tunes, adding funk to the mixture, and having more adventurous solos. The spirit of the music — a true fusion between North, South, and Central America — and an emphasis on infectious rhythms are the keys.

## GOSPEL

Gospel essentially breaks down into three separate categories — choir, country gospel and contemporary gospel. For many listeners, the word "gospel" conjures the sound of large African-American Southern gospel choirs, singing joyous songs of celebration. These choirs grew out of traditional spirituals and would later evolve into close-knit, small combos that were the blueprint for doo-wop groups. Another style of gospel was country gospel, which sounded like traditional country with lyrics about God. These two forms — along with blues gospel, which was never quite as widespread as country gospel — provided part of the foundation of contemporary gospel and CCM (Contemporary Christian Music), which came into existence in the late 1970s. The other part of CCM was soft rock and mainstream pop, which provided the sound of the genre. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, CCM was the most popular style of gospel, since it sounded like mainstream pop, only with religious lyrics.

While many white musicians gravitated toward country, folk, and old-time music to express their spirituality outside of traditional Christian hymns, Black Gospel music drew heavily upon the traditional spirituals that had been passed down from the days of slavery, picking up its more driving rhythmic emphasis from blues and early jazz. Composer and singer Thomas A. Dorsey crystallized the style in 1932 with his epochal "Take My Hand, Precious Lord," and went on to compose a great many songs that later became standards.




When performed in the churches, the music was traditionally sung by a choir, with individual soloists sometimes taking the spotlight; this often happened in a form known as “call and response,” in which either the choir or the soloist would repeat and/or answer the lyric which had just been sung by the other, with the soloist improvising embellishments of the melody for greater emphasis. As the music developed, these soloists became more and more virtuosic, performing with wild emotion (and, in the South, physicality) in order to properly express the spiritual ecstasy the music was meant to evoke. The music was quite egalitarian in terms of gender, as both male and female performers — Brother Joe May, Rev. James Cleveland, Mahalia Jackson, the Clara Ward Singers, etc. — gained wide renown among both black and white audiences. The small-group format was also prevalent, with major figures including the Five Blind Boys of Mississippi, the Soul Stirrers, the Swan Silvertones, and the Dixie Hummingbirds; in general, these groups placed a greater premium on smooth vocal harmonies, although some performances could approach the raucous energy (if not quite the huge sound) of a choir-with-soloist group.

As the years progressed, black gospel and black popular music influenced and borrowed from one another, reflecting the gradual change of emphasis toward R&B; black gospel also had an enormous impact on the development of soul music, which directed gospel’s spiritual intensity into more secular concerns, and included a great many performers whose musical skills were developed in the church. As a recognizable style unto itself, black gospel music largely ceased to develop around the 1970s; progressing racial attitudes had helped black popular music reach wider audiences (and become more lucrative) than ever before, and tastes had turned towards the earthy hedonism of funk and the highly arranged, sophisticated Philly soul sound. The former wasn’t quite appropriate for worship, and it wasn’t all that practical to duplicate the latter in church services. However, the traditional black gospel sound survived intact and was eventually augmented by contemporary gospel (an 1980s/90s variation strongly influenced by latter-day urban R&B); plus, singers like Whitney Houston continued to develop within its ranks.

## MOTOWN

The Motown label crafted a uniform house sound so instantly identifiable that “Motown” unequivocally became a style unto itself. During the 1960s, Berry Gordy, Jr.’s Detroit label became the biggest independent in the music industry, thanks to its smooth, sophisticated blend of R&B and memorable pop melodies. At Motown, the pop side of the equation took on greater importance than ever before, which helped make the records accessible to a wider audience; their velvety elegance helped cement black popular music firmly into mainstream American culture. Motown often utilized the same core session musicians on their records, which helped lay the Motown sound’s basic rhythmic foundation of bouncing bass and echoing drums. But their arrangements were frequently lush and elaborate, adding strings, horns, woodwinds, piano, extra percussion, or whatever else might enhance



the music's urbane stylishness. This polished pop craftsmanship, when matched with the smoothly soulful vocals of the Motown artist roster, became ubiquitously popular during the early 1960s, with songwriters like Smokey Robinson and the team of Eddie Holland, Lamont Dozier, and Brian Holland turning out one gem after another with almost assembly line regularity.

When Holland, Dozier and Holland left the label in a dispute over royalties, producer Norman Whitfield became a major figure at Motown, keeping the label in step with the harder, funkier direction that soul music was heading in. In 1970, the Jackson 5 became superstars with a funky bubble gum-soul that began to break away from established Motown formulas, and during the rest of the decade, performers like Marvin Gaye and Stevie Wonder took greater control of their own music, investing it with their own personalities and helping break up the standardized Motown blueprint. It's that blueprint, which brought artists like the Temptations, Four Tops, and Supremes stardom, that people mean when they describe music as "Motown."

## HIP-HOP AND URBAN MUSIC

Hip-Hop and Urban music emerged in the late '70s, and their histories have often been intertwined. Urban Soul grew out of the smooth stylings of Philly Soul and the slick dance of disco. Urban owed as much (if not more) to mainstream pop as it did to classic soul, and with its layers of synthesizers, slick production and reliance on ballads, Urban Soul rarely sounded like soul. It did sound like pop, which is one of the reasons why it became the dominant African American music genre in the 1980s. Some musicians, such as Michael Jackson and Prince, enlivened the genre by turning conventions on their ear, but most Urban artists simply followed the conventions, both for better (Luther Vandross) or for worse.

## CLUB/DANCE MUSIC

Club/Dance music comes in many different forms, from disco to hip-hop. Though there have been various dance crazes throughout the history of popular music, club/dance music became its own genre in the mid-1970s, as soul mutated into disco and whole clubs were devoted to dancing. In the late 1970s, dance clubs played disco, but by the end of the decade, disco was mutating into a number of different genres. All of the genres were collected under the catch-all term "dance," though there were distinct differences between dance-pop, hip-hop, house, and techno, among other subgenres. What tied them all together was their emphasis on rhythm — in each dance subgenre, the beat remains all-important.

# ACTIVITIES

## TIME LINE

Create a time line with two columns: one column lists the historical events while the other list musical events – introductions of new styles, major changes of style, when songs were released or when groups formed.

## MUSICAL STYLES

Music is divided into different categories, such as Jazz, Swing, R&B, Blues, Motown and Gospel.


- In what categories would you find the following artists? (circle the correct category)

Ella Fitzgerald	(Blues, Gospel, Swing)
Mahalia Jackson	(Blues, Jazz, Gospel)
Louis Armstrong	(Gospel, R & B, Swing)
Duke Ellington	(Gospel, Swing, Blues)
Aretha Franklin	(Swing, R & B, Jazz)
Marvin Gaye	(Gospel, Jazz, Motown)
Billie Holiday	(Gospel, R & B, Swing)
The Temptations	(Motown, Gospel, Blues)
Thomas Dorsey	(Jazz, Gospel, Motown)
- Pick an artist from the list above and write a paper about that person's biography including musical background and style(s) of music.

## IMPROVISATION

Improvisation is the spontaneous creation or performance of a work of art. Through improvisation the artist can let his/her mind freely make connections. In one sense improvisation lets the mind wander and see what it discovers. In another sense, improvisation draws upon knowledge already gained to create new connections.

Incorporating improvisation into the classroom will allow students to develop their creative thinking skills and give them an opportunity to discover ideas they did not realize they had. It can be incorporated into any discipline. Often artist will use a 'trigger' to begin the improvisation process. A trigger can be a word, image, sound, movement, etc. related to the subject matter the students are studying. The key is not to make it feel like a test, let the students respond naturally. They may respond



by either writing, visual art, creating sound/music or through movement. As the students evolve in improvisation techniques, you may want to encourage them to combine the different forms of art, e.g., writing and drawing in one response. You may want to try improvisation activities before you have begun lessons on a subject. These activities will begin students thinking about the subject, but students will not be in the mode of reciting what they have been told about the subject. Give students time to allow their minds to wander. There may be an initial 'letting go' period. The teacher begins the process, but students take it to its full development. Let things happen as they will.

**Samples:**

**Word Triggers:** Either write a word relating to the subject matter on the blackboard for the entire class to respond to or write several words on separate slips of paper and have students draw a slip from a hat or box.

- Have students write their 'reaction' to the word, whatever comes to their minds. It can be personal feelings or memories or academic pondering.
- Have students respond to the word by drawing, sound or movement. Example: The trigger word is "molecule." How would a molecule move, feel, etc.?

**Image Triggers:** Select an image – photo or diagram – related to the subject. This can be a class activity or you can select several images and break the class into groups. Sometimes an abstract image can create more interesting responses than images with which students are familiar. Have students respond by writing, drawing, sound or 'putting' the image in motion.

- Example: Pull a battle or exploration map from a history period. Have students respond to the image in writing, sound or movement.

**Sound Triggers:** Play music or ordinary sounds related to a specific subject matter you are studying in class. Have students respond.

- Example: your class is about to study the Doppler Effect. Play a recording of a sound coming toward you and a sound moving away. Have students respond by movement or visual art.

**Movement Triggers:** Do a spontaneous movement during class.

- Create a movement chain – one student does a movement and the next student responds to the movement and then the next, similar to dominos. Then have them respond to what they just did by drawing or painting.