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Textural Rhythms: Hear the Touch



Classroom photo by Rich Sofranko

STUDY GUIDE

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Artists on Tour

I: JAZZ

Jazz is considered an original American art form. It developed around 1900 in New Orleans and was the music that defined the 1920s and 1930s. Rooted in the musical traditions of African American folk music, jazz synthesized West African music with European classical music. From African American folk music, jazz utilized musical forms of field hollers, rowing chants, lullabies, spirituals and blues. It incorporated African freedom of vocal color; a tradition of improvisation; call and response patterns; and rhythmic complexity with specific styles and forms of European music—hymns, marches, waltzes, quadrilles, and other dance music, light theatrical music, and Italian operatic music. It is characterized by a strong, prominent meter; improvisation; and dotted or syncopated rhythmic patterns. The defining principle of jazz music is improvisation—an infinite number of melodies can fit the chord progressions of any song. Written scores are only used as guidelines. The musicians may improvise at any point.

LESSON PLAN

For comprehensive jazz lesson plans, music excerpts, and activities, please go to the NEA Jazz in the Schools website: www.neajazzintheschools.org/program/overview.php?uv=s

ACTIVITY: LISTEN UP! *(From NEA Jazz in the Schools website)*

Listening One

The improvised solo is a cornerstone of jazz. Instrumentalists, accompanied by a rhythm section or an entire band, perform spontaneous solos over chord changes (the harmonic structure of a tune). The extended improvised jazz solo developed, in part, from breaks, or short phrases performed while the band stops for one or more measures.

Listen to the following excerpts and observe how the soloists play through the breaks. Count the number of beats or measures per break and note the instruments that solo through the break. How does each soloist approach the break? How do the other instruments support the soloist?



(All songs listed below available on the NEA Jazz in the Schools website, www.neajazzintheschools.org)

- James Reese Europe's Hellfighter Band,  ["Memphis Blues"](#)
- Jelly Roll Morton,  ["Black Bottom Stomp"](#)
- Jelly Roll Morton,  ["Original Jelly Roll Blues"](#)
- Count Basie and his Orchestra,  ["Jumpin' at the Woodside"](#)

Listening Two

Stride pianists used their left hand to play low bass notes on beats 1 and 3 and chords in the middle register on beats 2 and 4. At the same time, they would play melody or improvise with their right hand. Listen to the following three masters of stride and jazz piano. Try to distinguish the chords from the melody, and describe how the musicians use either bass notes or chords to support their improvisations.







(All songs listed below available on the NEA Jazz in the Schools website, www.neajazzintheschools.org)

- Fats Waller,  [“Handful of Keys”](#)
- Art Tatum,  [“Get Happy”](#)

Listening Three

Jazz band arrangers employed various techniques to develop a driving sense of swing and to highlight improvised solos. For instance, arrangers used syncopation (offbeat rhythms), riffs (short melodic phrases played repeatedly over a series of chords), and call and response (phrases by a soloist or section that are answered by another section). Listen to the following excerpts and compare how the different bands and arrangers varied the instrumentation (musical instruments used in the arrangements), rhythms, and the interaction between sections (such as brass or reeds) and soloists. Note techniques such as the use of riffs and call and response.

(All songs listed below available on the NEA Jazz in the Schools website, www.neajazzintheschools.org)

- Fletcher Henderson and his Orchestra,  [“Keep a Song in Your Soul”](#)
- Benny Goodman and his Orchestra,  [“King Porter Stomp”](#)
- Paul Whiteman and his Orchestra,  [“Lonely Melody”](#)
- Count Basie and his Orchestra,  [“Jumpin’ at the Woodside”](#)
- Duke Ellington and his Famous Orchestra,  [“The Mooche”](#) or  [“Take the ‘A’ Train”](#)

OTHER ACTIVITIES

- ♦ Develop an historical timeline project identifying other facts of history during the development and journey of jazz.
- ♦ Have students research and write about musicians and artists who came to prominence during the periods of music discussed in the program.
- ♦ Trace other cultures’ development of music and how they used that music to communicate.

TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

ARRANGEMENT: The organization of a musical work for a given ensemble; determines which instruments play when, what harmonies and what rhythmic groove will be used, and where improvisation occurs.

ARRANGER: Someone who creates arrangements for musical ensembles

BAR: A musical unit consisting of a fixed number of beats—also known as a measure

BLUES FORM: A harmonic progression that typically consists of 12 measures, divided into three sections of four measures each. Often, the first section is a call or question, the second section repeats the question, and the third section resolves the question. The most basic blues form uses just three chords, though there are numerous variations.

CALL AND RESPONSE: A musical conversation in which instrumentalists and/or vocalists answer one another

CHORD: Three or more notes played at the same time, creating one sound. The harmonic structure of most songs is composed of a progression of different chords, on which soloists improvise.

DISSONANCE: A harsh, disagreeable combination of sounds that can suggest unresolved tension

DYNAMICS: The variation and contrast of loudness and softness in a piece of music

IMPROVISATION: The impromptu creation of new melodies to fit the structure of a song

SCORE: A written map of a piece of music that is created by the composer and that dictates the notes to be played by each instrument

STRIDE: An accompanimental technique perfected by Harlem jazz pianists of the 1920s, modifying the two-beat style of ragtime music, the left hand flows between bass note and chord in swing rhythms

SYNCOPIATION: The act of placing a rhythmic accent on an unexpected beat

TEMPO: The speed at which a piece of music is played

For a comprehensive list of jazz terms, go to:
www.neajazzintheschools.org/lesson1/glossary.php?uv=t

II. QUILTING

A quilt is a coverlet or blanket made of two layers of fabric with a layer of cotton, wool, feathers, or down in between, all stitched firmly together, usually in a decorative crisscross design. The top of the quilt may be constructed of many smaller pieces of fabric sewn together into a geometric or a free-form pattern.

The story of quilting in America begins with quilts made by the few colonial women with the leisure time to make them. The fabric used came from old clothing, curtains and such. Quilt-making became popular when manufactured fabric became plentiful and affordable around 1840. The history of African American quilting is a fascinating one. Unfortunately, few examples of early quilts by artists of this culture exist. Today, however, the craft is vital and many African Americans are producing stunning art quilts, many of which tell a story.

For further information about the history of quilts and quilting, go to:
<http://www.womenfolk.com/historyofquilts/>

ACTIVITY *(adapted from Yale New-Haven Teachers Institute The Art of the Quilt by Sylvia Sherertz)*

Students will make a collage which tells a story.

Materials:

- construction paper
- scissors
- glue
- old cut-able magazines
- paper scraps

Introduction:

Discuss the process of telling a story visually. What are the elements necessary? How can the artist get the message across? Refer to examples in the book, *Textural Rhythms: Quilting the Jazz Tradition*, by Carolyn L. Mazloomi.

Art Activity:

Students will sketch in pencil their story on paper. Then they will cut out of paper images which will depict the shapes and figures of their story. Other possibilities are using words, photos, or magazine images to tell their story.

Closure:

Students will exhibit their work and their classmates will read the stories told.

ACTIVITY: WORD TRIGGERS

Either write a word on the blackboard for the entire class to respond to or write several words on separate slips of paper and have students draw one from a box. Have students respond to the word by drawing a picture or creating a quilt design.

TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

APPLIQUÉ: The sewing technique for attaching pieces (appliqués) of fabric onto a background fabric. Appliqués may be stitched to the background by hand, using a blind stitch, or by machine.

BASTING: The sewing technique for joining by hand layers of fabric or the layers of a quilt with large stitches. The stitching is temporary and is removed after permanent stitching.

BATTING: The layers or sheets of filler placed between two pieces of fabric to form a quilt. Its thickness varies, and it provides warmth.

QUILTING: The small, running stitches made through the layers of a quilt – top, batting and backing – to form decorative patterns on the surface of the quilt and to hold the layers together.

GRAIN: The lengthwise and crosswise threads of a woven fabric. A grainline arrow, printed on a pattern, helps you properly place your pattern on the fabric.