



Jazz is a musical language of notes, rhythms, harmonies and melodies. The purpose of language is to express ourselves and communicate with each other. The language of jazz was born right here in America nearly one hundred years ago. It is a relatively new music that, like America itself, has been through many stages of growth, development and change.

Jazz was created, developed and refined by African Americans as an extension and outgrowth of earlier blues, spirituals and work song traditions that are deeply rooted in slavery. Jazz is a complete musical rejection of slavery and all the injustices that it stands for. It is a music that declares freedom as the most basic and fundamental of our human rights. This is part of the reason why jazz has gone beyond ethnic and cultural boundaries. It is now an international music that expresses the human experience and demonstrates all that we can achieve as one universal people when we are simply granted our freedom.

### **Melting Pot of Cultures**

Jazz music is a combination of different influences drawing on cultures from around the world. Through out history, these cultures and there unique musical styles have sculpted jazz. New Orleans, believed to be the birth place of jazz, was a melting pot of cultures, fusing different foods, languages, rituals and of course, music. Exploring music from other cultures will offer insight into the jazz tradition.

#### **Cuban Music**

The Caribbean island of Cuba has been influential in the development of multiple musical styles in the 19th and 20th centuries. The roots of most Cuban musical forms lie in the cabildos, a form of social club among African slaves brought to the island. Cuban music has its principal roots in Spain and West Africa. In the late 1940s, the trumpet player Dizzy Gillespie was involved in the movement called Afro-Cuban music, bringing Latin and African elements to greater prominence in jazz and even pop music, particularly salsa. Gillespie's most famous contributions to Afro-Cuban music are the compositions "Manteca" and "Tin Tin Deo".

### **Brazilian Music**

Strong influences on the music of Brazil come from many parts of the world, but there is very popular regional music styles influenced by African and European forms. After 500 years of history the Brazilian music developed some unique and original styles like Choro, Forró, Frevo, Samba and Bossa Nova. Tenor Saxophone player Stan Getz became a central figure in the Bossa nova movement in America. He then recorded with Jobim, João Gilberto and his wife, Astrud Gilberto. Their "The Girl from Ipanema" won a Grammy Award. The title piece became one of the most well known Latin jazz pieces of all time. *Getz/Gilberto* won two Grammys.

### **Caribbean Music**

The music of the Caribbean is a diverse grouping of musical genres. They are each syntheses of African, European, Indian and native influences. Some of the styles to gain wide popularity outside of the Caribbean include reggae, zouk, salsa and calypso. Tenor Saxophone player, Sonny Rollins acclaimed album, *Saxophone Colossus*, was recorded on June 22, 1956, featuring Tommy Flanagan on piano, bassist Doug Watkins and his favorite drummer Max Roach. It was a date on which he recorded perhaps his best-known composition "St. Thomas", a Caribbean calypso based on a tune sung to him by his mother in his childhood.

### **African Music**

African music is as vast and varied as the continent's many nations and ethnic groups. The music and dance forms of the African diaspora (many Caribbean and Latin American music genres like rumba and salsa, as well as African American music) were founded to varying degrees on musical traditions from Africa, taken there by African slaves. Sub-Saharan music has as its special feature a rhythmic music that has spread to other regions especially to the Americas. African Polyrhythm are a distinctive and characteristic of most African music. In the 1960s, pianist Randy Weston's music prominently incorporated African elements, as shown on the large-scale *Uhuru Africa* (with the participation of poet Langston Hughes) and *Highlife: Music From the New African Nations*. In 1967 Weston was invited to travel throughout Africa with a US cultural delegation.

## **Classical Music**

Classical music is a broad term, referring to music produced in, or rooted in the traditions of, Western art and concert music, encompassing a broad period from roughly 1000 to the present day. Three of the most recognized composers to emerge from this tradition were Bach, Beethoven and Mozart. Classical music can be broken up into sub groups including Renaissance, Baroque, Romantic and 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Modern Jazz Quartet was established in 1952 by Milt Jackson (vibraphone), John Lewis (piano, musical director), Percy Heath (bass), and Kenny Clarke (drums). MJQ's music making was unique because it embraced an aspect of classical music. Each individual member could improvise with an exciting vibrancy specialized in baroque counterpoint.

## **Traditional Jazz Instruments**

### **Acoustic Bass (Double Bass or Upright Bass)**

The Bass is part of the string family including violin and guitar. Notes are produced when the string vibrates. The Double Bass was first used in symphony orchestras. In a jazz group, the bass anchors the low notes that go along with the melody and help keep the tempo steady.

### **Percussion**

The grouping of drums and cymbals used in a Jazz group are called a trap set or "kit". Percussion basically means to "hit things together". Your hands become a percussion instrument when you clap. The drums also cooperate with the bass to help keep the tempo steady.

### **Piano**

The piano is a member of the percussion family. If you look inside a piano you will see many strings. The piano is a percussion instrument because notes are made when the felt hammer hits the piano strings. The piano can play groups of notes called chords. These chords blend with the low notes played by the bass, and the steady rhythms produced by the drum set, to produce the rhythm section sound.

## **Brass Instruments**

Trumpet and trombone are members of the brass family. Brass players make sounds by blowing and buzzing their lips in a mouthpiece that looks like a small cup. Pressing buttons open and close different sections of the brass tube that creates different pitches. A trumpet may look short, but it is actually made up of many feet of brass tube. Louis Armstrong played both trumpet and cornet. The cornet looks like a short trumpet and is easier to march with in New Orleans street parades. A trombone player slides a long piece of brass tube up and down to sound different notes.

## **Wind Instruments**

Saxophone and clarinet are members of the woodwind family. Woodwinds make their sounds with the help of a reed, which is a piece of cane wood strapped to the mouthpiece. Sound is produced when the player blows into the mouthpiece, which causes the reed to vibrate. To make the different notes sound, the woodwind player then presses keys that open and close holes on the sides of the instrument.

## **Improvisation**

Improvisation means making it up as you go along. People improvise all the time in their daily lives. For instance, you may be improvising when you choose a different way to travel home from school on a particular day. Cooks often improvise when they are preparing a meal.

Jazz musicians do the same thing with music, developing their improvisations using instruments and vocals. Jazz musicians start with a basic idea, usually a tune that has a melody and some repeating chords. Essentially, the musicians are talking to each other with notes and rhythms, melodic ideas and other sounds as their language. A musician's ability to improvise is influenced by how much they have practiced and studied the music forms they are playing. Musicians listen very carefully to how and what the other members of the group are playing in order to create something that sounds good as a whole.

## **Activities**

### **Visual Improvisation to Music**

Play selected music and provide students with a variety of art supplies. Create visual image in response to the music. Notice tempo, tension, feelings, harmony and how the musical elements convey emotions or ideas.

*Extension:* Make collaborative improvised artwork by passing a drawing or painting around the classroom.

*How did you decide what to paint, draw or sculpt?*

*Was it planned?*

*Was it spontaneous?*

### **Group Story Improvisation**

Sit in a circle and tell a collective short story. One student begins the story and then students take turns in order around the circle adding a sentence or two. Give the story a beginning, middle and end and a consistent flow of voice. As students become comfortable, add pulse to the delivery using simple percussion instruments or clapping etc. Student scan contribute their lines in rhythmic patterns.

*How did it feel to speak without time to prepare?*

*Did the percussion element make the improvisation difficult?*

### **Building an Ensemble**

Ask one student to tap a rhythm on a found object or percussion instrument and ask others to copy it. Another student can introduce a complimentary beat. When the rhythm is strong, students can take turns creating variation on top of the steady rhythmic theme. Ask each student in the group to take a turn as soloist.

## Jazz Vocabulary

**Arrangement (or chart)-** The written adaptation of a composition for a group of Instruments.

**Ballad-** A slow song, usually with lyrics that tell a story.

**Bebop (or Bop)-** The first modern Jazz style; evolved in the 1940's. Bop's emphasis was on complex harmonic and rhythmic improvisation. Examples: Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie.

**Blues-** A 12-bar song form that evolved from black spirituals and work song; its unique elements are blue notes, speech-like inflection, and emotional expression.

**Chord-** Three or more notes played simultaneously (as on piano).

**Chord changes (or changes)-** The sequence of chords that provides the harmonic structure of a composition.

**Cool Jazz-** A Jazz style that originated in the 1950's with Miles Davis' *Birth Of The Cool* album, and is often identified with "West Coast Jazz."

**Counterpoint-** Two or more melodies (each strong enough to stand alone) played simultaneously to produce a single musical fabric.

**Dixieland-** An early style of jazz originating in the early 20th century in New Orleans.

**Free Jazz (also Avant-Garde Jazz)-** A style of Jazz that emerged in the 1960's in the music of Ornette Coleman, Cecil Taylor, and many others; "free" of conventional rhythm, harmony, and/or melody.

**Jam session-** An informal gathering of musicians who don't regularly play together.

**Melody (head)**- A succession of notes that together form a complete musical statement; a tune. This is the part of the jazz piece that is written down or composed ahead of time. Musicians sometimes point to their heads to make sure that everyone knows when to play the melody again.

**Modal Jazz**- A style of Jazz based on "modes" instead of chords changes that freed Jazz musicians from the conventional harmonic progressions. Examples: Miles Davis' "Kind of Blue" and John Coltrane's "My Favorite Things".

**Polyrhythm**- Two or more rhythms played at the same time.

**Scale**- A series of notes arranged in ascending or descending order.

**Scatting**- A term for how vocalists improvise in a jazz setting. They choose words, syllables or sounds to make up their creative ideas. Example: Louis Armstrong, Betty Carter, and Ella Fitzgerald

**Swing (noun)**- Dance-oriented big band music that became immensely popular during the 1930's. Examples: Benny Goodman, Count Basie, and Duke Ellington.

**Swing (verb)**- A feeling of rhythmic bounce and drive; an essential defining element of Jazz.

**Syncopation**- Different rhythmic groupings played simultaneously against the primary rhythmic pulse.