

Study Guide For Teachers

Jazz for Kids
by
The Dave Leonhardt Jazz Group
presented by
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ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Jazz For Kids introduces children to the jazz idiom, its styles and use of creative improvisation with interactive demonstrations throughout. By using familiar songs David Leonhardt explains how a jazz musician uses the form and raw materials of a composition to structure a unique performance every time. Popular songs as well as classical themes are played in various styles and tempos and arranged in different manners to demonstrate how to understand and appreciate a jazz performance. The instruments on stage will be demonstrated and musical composition revealed through a “deconstruction” of a song. Throughout the presentation the artists strive to inspire and educate on aspects of the beauty of jazz music.

LEARNING GOALS

Students will:

- Hear various jazz instruments and be able to identify them.
- Gain an understanding of improvisation, and how jazz musicians use improvisation in live performances.
- See a group of musicians demonstrate expertise and teamwork.
- Learn about the history of jazz.
- Hear familiar songs performed through jazz improvisation.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS

Jazz music is different than other kinds of music because musicians make up music on the spot. This is called creative improvisation and is what makes jazz exciting. In a jazz group the musicians listen to each other and shape the sounds coming from their instruments in response to what they hear. A jazz performance is a musical conversation between musicians. The difference between jazz and many other types of music is the same as reciting a poem that you have memorized and having an interesting conversation with your friends. One is done by memory and the other takes shape depending on what is said by each person. Often jazz musicians will play a recognizable melody and then develop it with variations and interesting twists.

Although any instrument can be used to play jazz quite often a jazz group has a piano, a bass, and drums. This is called the rhythm section and sets the feeling of the music for other instruments to improvise with. Other instruments used in jazz are trumpets, saxophones, guitars and vibraphones.

Jazz is an American art form but has always been influenced by music from other cultures. It is quite natural for a jazz song to use melodies and rhythms from South America, the Caribbean Islands, Gospel music as well as Rock and Roll. These and other styles of music have been influenced by jazz as well and quite often a jazz flavor can now be heard in music from around the globe.

It takes years of study and practice to become a master jazz improviser. A knowledge of chords, scales and melodic patterns are a must as well as countless hours of group playing to attain a high level of creative skill.

BEFORE THE PROGRAM

Talk about jazz music and improvisation with your students. Some guiding questions might be:

- What makes jazz music unique?
- What is improvisation?
- How do we improvise in our daily lives?
- Where do you expect to hear jazz music?

Research the history of jazz, and choose one major figure in jazz to “adopt.” Learn all that you can about that musician and listen to some of his/her music as a class.

Compile a list of descriptive words that come to mind when thinking of jazz.

Listen to several different pieces of music, and try to find the rhythm in each. Clap along as a class.

AFTER THE PROGRAM

Try some of these activities with your class.

Rhythm in Rhymes

Have the class recite a favorite nursery rhyme. Identify the rhythm of the verse by clapping while reciting it. Then clap the rhythm only. Try a few of these and then explore scatting the rhythm and stomping feet to it. Divide into groups and assign each a different way to practice it such as clapping or stomping etc. Each group can present their work.

Follow The Leader

This is a good game to do after completing some of the suggestions listed above. It can be done with the entire class or in smaller groups. Make a circle and choose one volunteer as the “leader”. The leader claps or stomps a short rhythm (4 beats) and the class has to repeat it back like an echo. Change the leaders often.

Rhythm in Nature

Use the idea of finding rhythm in ourselves and the world around us as a topic for group discussion. (e.g. the rhythms of breathing and heartbeats, the rhythm of ocean waves, running and swinging on a swing, the rhythm of a basketball etc.) Generate a list and divide into groups and have each group choose 4 examples. Each group must then devise a way to mimic these rhythms. (For example clapping hands to the rhythm of a heartbeat, or swaying to the rhythm of ocean waves.) One group can try and guess the rhythms the other group is mimicking.

VOCABULARY WORDS

Be-bop - a style of jazz from the 1940's noted for complex rhythms and fast tempos

Blues - an important song style in jazz having a distinctive twelve measure form often with a sad-comic flavor

Chords - three or more notes played together to give a pleasing sound

Improvisation - spontaneously creating steps, combinations or rhythms without a set routine

Percussion - striking one thing against another, as with percussion instruments or drums

Rhythm - musical pattern of regularly recurring sounds or beats; like a heartbeat

Rhythm Section - Piano bass and drums of a jazz band providing the foundation for a performance

Scat - nonsensical rhythmic vocalizations; often used by jazz singers as a vehicle for vocal improvisation

ARTIST INFORMATION

The David Leonhardt Jazz Group is a critically acclaimed acoustic ensemble that plays a blend of mainstream and modern jazz. The group relies on creative improvisation, playing both jazz standards and originals. **David Leonhardt**, jazz pianist and composer, is a highly skilled and versatile artist. His thirty years of professional experience has included recordings, T.V. and radio, concerts and festivals, night clubs and stage shows. He has appeared internationally throughout North and South America, Europe, the Middle and Far East with some of the biggest names in jazz. He is the founder and president of Big Bang Records.

RESOURCES

The David Leonhardt Jazz Group

www.davidleonhardt.com

Jazz Educator products

www.aebersold.com

The Sound That Jazz Makes

by Carole Weatherford (for younger readers)

Listening To Jazz

By Jerry Coker (for student musicians)