

JAZZ IMPROVISATION Lesson Plan #1

Connor Wertman

Grade: 9-12

Class: Jazz Ensemble/ Big Band

Topic: Improvisation

Total Time: 60 minutes

Overview:

- *This lesson will cover the topic of jazz improvisation for students with little exposure through repetition, call and response, listening, and performing.*

Objectives:

- *The intention of this lesson is to provide a foundation for students to further develop their musical understanding of jazz improvisation, while also providing them with the necessary resources and tools to do so.*

Materials Needed:

- *A jazz ensemble with instruments ready to play*
- *Projector or speaker system*
- *Director's instrument of choice*

Plan:

- *Have the ensemble set up their instruments and sit their assigned seats*
- *Begin class with a call and response exercise*
 - *Have a 12 bar Bb blues playing over the speaker system in the classroom loud enough that it can be heard while the ensemble plays. If your ensemble's rhythm section is developed enough, you may have your rhythm section do this instead of having a recording.*
 - *Play simple ideas on your instrument of choice and have the ensemble repeat the ideas back to you. If needed, repeat ideas until the ensemble catches on. No music is necessary, the point of this exercise is to have the ensemble use their ears to select the notes to play instead of relying on sheet music. Begin with playing 1-2 notes with very simple rhythms over 2 measures, and have the ensemble repeat these ideas back over the next two measures. Allow these ideas to grow in complexity if the ensemble is capable, and repeat until satisfied. If this is the first time you are doing this exercise with your ensemble, instructions will be necessary. After a while, you may be able to start this exercise without instruction or have a student lead it.*
- *After warming up with this, persuade students to attempt improvising over an entire chorus by themselves. Pass this around until satisfaction.*
- *Begin the listening portion of the lesson by playing multiple recordings of jazz solos that pertain to the repertoire that you're preparing in class (For example: If you are playing a Count Basie chart, play "Jumpin at the Woodside"). Have the ensemble analyze solos and stylistic choices to implement into playing.*
- *After this, use the remainder of class time to prepare repertoire while implementing these techniques.*

JAZZ LISTENING Lesson Plan #2

Connor Wertman

Grade: 6-12

Class: Jazz Ensemble/ Big Band, General Music Class/ Jazz History

Topic: Stylistic differences of eras, composers, and musicians

Total Time: 60 minutes

Overview:

- *This lesson will cover the topic of stylistic choices in jazz through active listening, group discussion, and exposure of resources.*

Objectives:

- *The intention of this lesson is to have students walk out of the room understanding the differences of jazz eras, jazz composers, and jazz musicians.*

Materials Needed:

- *Speaker system*

Plan:

- *If in a jazz ensemble environment, do not have students set up instruments to limit distractions.*
- *Begin class with an open (but formatted) discussion of the eras of jazz and the composers, musicians, and history of the era:*
 - *EARLY JAZZ/NEW ORLEANS/DIXIELAND, ORIGINAL DIXIELAND JAZZ BAND*
 - *BIG BAND - 1920's-1930's, ELLINGTON, BASIE, ARMSTRONG, MILLER*
 - *BEBOP - 1940's, CHARLIE PARKER, DIZZY GILLESPIE, THELONIOUS MONK*
 - *COOL/HARD BOP - 1950's, MILES DAVIS, DAVE BRUBECK / ART BLAKEY*
 - *FREE JAZZ - 1960's, ORNETTE COLEMAN*
 - *FUSION - 1970's, WEATHER REPORT*
 - *NEOCLASSICAL - 1980's-PRESENT, WYNTON MARSALIS*
- *Discuss stylistic choices of each era, but refrain from playing any recordings.*
- *After this, have a list of 10-15 jazz recordings ready to play. Make sure to cover every era discussed. A list may look something like this:*
 - *TIGER RAG - THE ORIGINAL DIXIELAND JAZZ BAND*
 - *MOOD INDIGO - DUKE ELLINGTON*
 - *POTATO HEAD BLUES - LOUIS ARMSTRONG AND HIS HOT SEVEN*
 - *DONNA LEE - CHARLIE PARKER*
 - *A NIGHT IN TUNISIA - DIZZY GILLESPIE*
 - *MILESTONES - MILES DAVIS*
 - *BLUE RONDO A LA TURK - DAVE BRUBECK*
 - *MOANIN' - ART BLAKEY AND THE JAZZ MESSENGERS*
 - *LONELY WOMAN - ORNETTE COLEMAN*
 - *BIRDLAND - WEATHER REPORT*
- *Have students listen to these blind and have them guess the era based off of stylistic choices alone. After discussion, reveal the title, composer, and era of the song while extenuating upon previous points.*

JAZZ PROGRESSIONS Lesson Plan #3

Connor Wertman

Grade: 9-12

Class: Jazz Ensemble/ Jazz History

Topic: Harmonic structure of basic jazz compositions

Total Time: 20 minutes

Overview:

- *This lesson will cover the most basic harmonic structure of the 12 bar blues, as well as the ii-V-I.*

Objectives:

- *The intention of this lesson is to have students develop a basic knowledge of the 12 bar blues, where to find it, and how to navigate it as well as providing the ensemble with basic knowledge of the ii-V-I chord sequence.*

Materials Needed:

- *Speaker system*
- *Piano or 12 bar blues recording*
- *Directors instrument of choice*
- *A circle of 4ths diagram*

Plan:

- *Have the ensemble sit in assigned seats with instruments put together.*
- *Begin class by playing the following recordings*
 - *ST. LOUIS BLUES - W.C. HANDY*
 - *AU PRIVAVE - CHARLIE PARKER*
 - *ROCK AND ROLL - LED ZEPPELIN*
 - *SPIDER MAN (THEME SONG) - PAUL FRANCIS WEBSTER/ BOB HARRIS*
- *Ask the ensemble/ class what all these songs have in common, and then disclose that they are all 12 bar blues.*
- *After this, walk the class through the changes in each piece. This will help familiarize this progression.*
- *Explain and demonstrate how to improvise over these changes on the piano or on your instrument of choice.*
- *Have the ensemble play the root of the chord through the entire form (in a Bb blues, you would sequentially play concert Bb, Bb, Bb, Bb, Eb, Eb, Bb, Bb, F, Eb, Bb, Bb)*
- *After this, begin demonstration of the ii-V-I progression by playing AUTUMN LEAVES by Joseph Kosma*
- *Show the ensemble the changes from the Real Book and show its similarity to the circle of 4ths, then compare the circle of 4ths to the ii-V-I progression and articulate its similarities.*

JAZZ COMPOSITION Lesson Plan #4

Connor Wertman

Grade: 9-12

Class: Jazz Ensemble

Topic: Composing a jazz chart based off the 12 bar blues

Total Time: 60 minutes

Overview:

- *This lesson will allow students to express their creativity and compose the head of a jazz chart based off of the 12 bar blues in a combo setting.*

Objectives:

- *The intention of this lesson is to allow students to take creative control and compose a chart based on knowledge obtained from previous lessons on the 12 bar blues.*

Materials Needed:

- *Staff paper or a music notation software like musescore*
- *Pencils*

Plan:

- *Assign students into groups of 4 or 5*
- *Discuss the requirements of the assignment. Students are to compose the head of a 12 bar blues and transpose the melody for all instruments in the ensemble. Write 12 measures, include some form of repetition and have it follow the changes tonically.*
- *Send them into separate areas of the band room with their instruments and hop around groups to assist with any questions or issues.*
- *Have each group play their compositions at the end of class with the rhythm section, discuss with the ensemble in entirety.*

JAZZ STANDARD Lesson Plan #5

Connor Wertman

Grade: 9-12

Class: Jazz Ensemble

Topic: Preparation and performance of a jazz standard from the real book

Total Time: 60 minutes

Overview:

- *This lesson will allow students to express their creativity and prepare a jazz standard in a combo setting.*

Objectives:

- *The intention of this lesson is to allow students to take creative control and prepare a jazz standard in a combo setting with their own creative flair.*

Materials Needed:

- *Staff paper or a music notation software like musescore*
- *Pencils*
- *Real book PDFs*

Plan:

- *Assign students into groups of 4 or 5*
- *Discuss the requirements of the assignment. Students are to prepare the head and chord changes of a standard from the real book, as well as adding something different that they haven't stolen from a previous composition or recording. Alterations may include rhythmic alteration, swing charts turned into ballads, ballads turned into swing charts, altering the meter/tempo, harmonic changes, ect.*
- *Send them into separate areas of the band room with their instruments and hop around groups to assist with any questions or issues.*
- *Have each group play their work at the end of class with the rhythm section, discuss with the ensemble in entirety.*