

An Introduction to Jazz

Grade 11 | Lesson Plan 6: Cool, Hard Bop, and Modal Jazz

Adapted from Jazz in America: The National Jazz Curriculum

TOPIC:

1. Cool: 1949 - 1955¹
2. Hard Bop and "Funky" Jazz: 1951-1958²
3. Important Figures
4. Cultural Implications

SESSION OBJECTIVES:

The student will:

1. gain a fundamental understanding of Cool Jazz
 - a. reaction to bebop
 - b. performance practices
2. gain a fundamental understanding of Hard Bop and Funky Jazz
 - a. reaction to cool
 - b. performance practices
3. gain a fundamental understanding of Modal Jazz
 - a. reaction to hard bop and cool
 - b. performance practices
4. learn the basic definition of several terms associated with jazz
 - a. contrafact
 - b. dynamics
 - c. homophony
 - d. mode
 - e. nonet
 - f. polyphony
5. listen to Cool, Hard Bop, Funky Jazz, and Modal Jazz recordings
6. become acquainted with Miles Davis and Art Blakey
7. participate in a class discussion regarding the cultural implications of jazz in the 1950s

MATERIALS

1. Computer with internet connection
2. Speaker system

Note: This lesson plan includes prompts to play selections from a variety of jazz recordings. Many of the suggested recordings can be found on the Instrumental History of Jazz, which is available as a YouTube playlist, as well as a variety of streaming and/or download outlets including iTunes, Apple Music and Spotify.

INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES:

¹ All styles of jazz from Dixieland to contemporary are still being performed and recorded today; all style dates given are the approximations of when each respective style came to the forefront of jazz and experienced its most concentrated development; of course, styles and dates overlap.

² The term "Funky Jazz" in the 1950s should not be confused with "Funk," a style of popular music pioneered in the 1970s. Funky Jazz is characterized by its earthy, "low down," soulful, bluesy, and gospel flavored qualities, e.g., *Moanin'*, Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers. While Funk also combines elements of jazz, blues, and soul, it is characterized by syncopated rock rhythms and a heavy, repetitive bass line, e.g., *Chameleon*, Herbie Hancock.

The instructor will:

1. discuss Cool, Hard Bop and Funky Jazz, and Modal Jazz
2. play significant Cool recordings
 - a. *Boplicity*, Miles Davis
 - b. *Bernie's Tune*, Gerry Mulligan Quartet
 - c. *Take Five*, Dave Brubeck
3. play significant Hard Bop recordings
 - a. *Nica's Dream*, Horace Silver Quintet
 - b. *Walkin'*, Miles Davis
 - c. *St. Thomas*, Sonny Rollins
 - d. *Giant Steps*, John Coltrane
4. play significant Funky Jazz recordings
 - a. *Moanin'*, Art Blakey & The Jazz Messengers
 - b. *Song for My Father*, Horace Silver
5. play significant Modal Jazz recordings:
 - a. *Impressions*, John Coltrane
 - b. *All Blues*, Miles Davis
 - c. *Footprints*, Miles Davis
6. lead a class discussion regarding the cultural implications of jazz during the Cool, Hard Bop, and Modal Eras

Content Outline

I. Cool (1949-1955)

A. Reaction to Bebop

1. if Bebop was a reaction to Swing, then Cool was a reaction to the reaction
 - a. Bebop was a fast-paced, energetic, raw emotional, loud, "hot" style of jazz
 - b. Cool was usually a slower paced, more subdued, less emotional, softer, more controlled, "cooler" style of jazz
2. Cool re-popularized jazz and pulled it back into the mainstream of America
3. while Cool jazz was performed by both black and white musicians in all major cities, it has been most closely associated with young white players (e.g., baritone saxophonist Gerry Mulligan, trumpet player Chet Baker, pianist Dave Brubeck, alto saxophonist Paul Desmond) on the West Coast (i.e., Los Angeles and San Francisco); highly significant east coast black Cool innovators included trumpet player Miles Davis and pianist John Lewis
4. the size of the Cool groups were more varied than their Bebop counterparts
 - a. Bebop combos usually ranged from quartets to sextets
 - b. Cool combos ranged from trios (three members) to nonets (nine members)
5. the instrumentation of the Cool groups were more varied than their Bebop counterparts
 - a. Bebop combos usually consisted of trumpet, saxophone, piano, bass, and drums
 - b. besides the standard Bebop instrumentation, Cool combos often included softer, more "classical" instruments, e.g., flute, oboe, clarinet, French horn, flugelhorn, vibes, tuba, guitar, etc.)
6. Cool influences and tune sources included swing, bebop, pop, and classical music

B. Performance Practices

1. written arrangements
2. use of polyphony
 - a. Bebop employed more homophony, i.e., one melodic line (the soloist) with accompanying chords (the pianist) underneath
 - b. besides homophony, Cool often employed polyphony, i.e., two or more independent melodic lines sounded together
3. integration of arrangement and improvisation; both were important
4. rhythm sections were basically passive, providing subtle accompaniment
5. the dynamic range (i.e., soft to loud), as well as the emotionally expressive range, was usually more narrow in Cool than in Bebop
6. Cool utilized the basic musical language of Bebop, but more simplified; the use of the blues was minimized (more classical influence than blues influence)
7. compared to Bebop, Cool jazz was more "tune oriented," i.e., more singable, easy, narrow range, simple rhythms

C. Important Figures

1. Chet Baker, trumpet (1929-1988)
2. Dave Brubeck, piano (b. 1920)
3. Miles Davis, trumpet (1926-1991)
4. Modern Jazz Quartet (John Lewis, piano; Milt Jackson, vibes, Percy Heath, bass, Connie Kay, drums)
5. Gerry Mulligan, baritone saxophone (1927-1996)

D. Play recordings

1. *Boplicity*, Miles Davis
2. *Bernie's Tune*, Gerry Mulligan Quartet
3. *Take Five*, Dave Brubeck

II. Hard Bop (1951-1958)

A. Reaction to Cool

1. if Bebop was a reaction to Swing, and Cool was a reaction to the reaction, then Hard Bop may have been a reaction to the reaction of the reaction
 - a. Cool was generally a slow paced, subdued, less emotional, soft, controlled, "cool" style of jazz
 - b. Hard Bop represented a return to the fast-paced, emotionally charged, energetic, "hot" style of bebop but with more sophistication and control
2. Hard Bop was heavily dominated by young African Americans disenchanted with Cool's white domination, de-emphasis of the blues, and sublimation of the emotional and rhythmic components of the music
3. Hard Bop was centered mainly in Northern cities with a large black population, i.e., New York, Chicago, Detroit, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Indianapolis

B. Hard Bop and Funky - two distinct substyles:

1. shared characteristics between the two substyles:
 - a. both came out of bebop
 - b. many of the same artists were active and important in both (e.g., Horace Silver, Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers, Cannonball Adderley)
 - c. both display the successful integration of composition, arrangement, and improvisation
 - d. the instrumentation was generally two or three horns plus rhythm section (piano and/or guitar, bass, and drums); however, trios and quartets performed in this genre as well
 - e. groups came to prominence on the labels of small independent record companies that surfaced in the late 1940s and '50s, e.g., Prestige, Blue Note, and Savoy
2. differences between the two substyles
 - a. Tune Sources
 - i. Hard Bop: blues, standards, bebop tunes, originals, and contrafacts³
 - ii. Funky: more limited than in hard bop; most funky jazz tunes were extant blues tunes or original compositions heavily blues and/or gospel influenced
 - b. Forms
 - i. Hard Bop: often unorthodox, varied, and complex
 - ii. Funky: simple (e.g., 12-bar blues, 16-bar tune, etc.)
 - c. Harmony
 - i. Hard Bop: often complex and unorthodox
 - ii. Funky: simple harmonies (often just two or three chords)
 - d. Melody
 - i. Hard Bop: heads and solos often employed complex scales
 - ii. Funky: heads and solos utilized simple scales, mostly related to the blues
 - e. Rhythm
 - i. Hard Bop: sophisticated and subtle
 - ii. Funky: simple and explicitly stated (strong influence of gospel and R&B)
 - f. Sophistication
 - i. Hard Bop: cerebral (however, not void of emotion)
 - ii. Funky: "earthy," "down-home"

C. Important Figures

1. Cannonball Adderley, alto sax (1928-1975)
2. Art Blakey, drums (1919-1990)
3. John Coltrane, tenor saxophone (1926-1967)
4. Miles Davis, trumpet (1926-1991)

³ *Contrafact*: complex bebop tune written utilizing the same chord progression as an extant standard tune

5. Barry Harris, piano, (b. 1929)
6. Jimmy Heath, tenor saxophone (b. 1926)
7. The Jazz Messengers (groups led by Art Blakey)
8. Sonny Rollins, tenor saxophone (b. 1930)
9. Horace Silver, piano (1928-2014)

D. Play recordings:

1. Hard Bop: *Nica's Dream*, Horace Silver Quintet; *Walkin'*, Miles Davis; *St. Thomas*, Sonny Rollins; *Giant Steps*, John Coltrane
2. Funky: *Moanin'*, Art Blakey & The Jazz Messengers; *Song for My Father*, Horace Silver

III. Modal Jazz

A. An outgrowth of Cool and Hard Bop and a precursor to the imminent Free Jazz movement (see Lesson Plan 7) was Modal Jazz, that is, jazz based on a limited number of modes (particular musical scales), as opposed to a progression of changing chords

B. Several avid hard bop players (e.g. John Coltrane), after struggling with drug addiction and experiencing spiritual rebirth, focused on modal playing, concentrating on agitated rhythms and distorted timbres as opposed to "making the changes" (i.e., having their improvised notes "fit" the chords); without having to be concerned with chord progressions, modal jazz musicians were freer to concentrate more on emotional content

C. The first important Modal Jazz recording was Miles Davis' 1959 release "Kind of Blue"; it featured simple melodies and modal harmony, reflecting both cool emotion and hard edge haunted Hard Bop timbres

D. Important Figures

1. John Coltrane, tenor saxophone (1926-1967)
2. Miles Davis, trumpet (1926-1991)
3. George Russell, piano (b. 1923)

E. Play recordings

1. *Impressions*, John Coltrane
2. *All Blues*, Miles Davis
3. *Footprints*, Miles Davis

IV. Cultural Implications

A. Cool

1. Post-World War II showed a shift in American attitudes stimulated by both a newfound affluence in the 1950s and uncertainty in the future
2. Cool jazz reflected (and contributed to) a subdued emotion and quiet intellectual control that had become valued in American society
 - a. "keeping cool" was an expression of emotional self-control in time of crisis found in American street slang as well in the language of army test pilots
 - b. after many labor strikes, Congress passed the Taft-Hartley Act mandating a "cooling off period" in labor disputes
 - c. "firm and patient" measures were discussed by politicians and diplomats regarding the United States' relationship with the Soviet Union
 - d. fictional heroes like James Bond and Mike Hammer remained impassive while the world exploded around them

- e. America's top choice of entertainment had "cooled down" from the nightclubs, dancehalls, amusement parks, vaudeville, etc. of prior generations to television featuring shows about simple suburban life (e.g., The Donna Reed Show)
 - f. due to the newfound weapons of mass destruction (e.g., atomic bomb), cool thinking was required at this crucial point in history
3. California
- a. the California image of casual, laid-back white suburbia was the perfect backdrop and breeding ground for cool jazz
 - b. cool jazz represented the increasing importance of California to American society and culture

B. Hard Bop

1. disenchanted with the white domination of Cool jazz and its European classical music influences, many African American jazz musicians went in the opposite direction of Cool jazz, playing even harder-driving bebop
2. perhaps the key feature of hard bop was its militantly African American identity
 - a. hard bop was a means of expression and reaction from young African American men to demonstrate their dissatisfaction and anger toward the social, political, and economic climate of America at that time, i.e., segregation and lack of economic equity
 - b. in this era of civil right activism, many African American musicians reflected their protest through hard bop jazz
3. besides more drive, complexity, and control, Hard Bop added more "soul" to bebop, that is, additional elements of traditional and popular African American music including blues, rhythm and blues (R&B), and black gospel music; the music was undeniably Afro-centric
4. New York
 - a. hard bop reflected the fast-paced, driving, complex New York lifestyle
 - b. as in all major northern cities, New York experienced an increasing African American population, making it an ideal backdrop and breeding ground for Hard Bop
5. Hard Bop is currently enjoying a resurgence and is the main influence behind today's young "straight ahead" players; it is the mainstay of today's jam sessions

C. Modal Jazz

1. modal playing was, in part, a rejection of European chord progressions, creating a path toward an even more Afrocentric American music
2. Modal Jazz was among the many cultural indicators of the impact of the black revolution for civil rights
3. coming at a time of increasing inner city anger and a civil rights revolution (as well as from a nation and world dealing with a cold war mentality), modal jazz was one of the many indicators of the explosive cultural and musical developments to come in the approaching decades
4. while many jazz musicians were still struggling with drug abuse, there was a general shifting away from drugs towards Afrocentric forms of spirituality