

An Introduction to Jazz

Grade 5 | Lesson Plan 8: Jazz Today, Jazz Tomorrow

Adapted from Jazz in America: The National Jazz Curriculum

TOPICS:

1. Jazz Today
2. Jazz Tomorrow

SESSION OBJECTIVES:

The student will:

1. Gain a fundamental understanding of jazz as it exists today, using three broad categories:
 - a. Traditionalists
 - b. Contemporary Mainstream
 - c. “Anything Goes”
2. Listen to examples of several types of contemporary jazz
3. Gain a fundamental understanding of how jazz is expected to evolve in the coming years

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:

The instructor will:

1. Discuss today’s jazz using three categories
 - a. Traditionalists
 - b. Contemporary Mainstream
 - c. “Anything Goes”
2. Play significant recordings from contemporary jazz
3. Lead a class discussion on how jazz is expected to evolve in the coming years

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

The students will:

1. participate in a class discussion regarding today’s jazz
2. participate in a class discussion regarding where jazz is likely heading
3. listen to recordings of current jazz artists

Content Outline

I. Jazz Today

A. Three Types of Jazz Artists Today

1. *Traditionalists* are performing jazz mainly related to Blues, Swing, Bebop, and Hard Bop; in other words, they exclude Free Jazz and Fusion.
 - a. Traditionalists believe that what they play is "real jazz," not the various hybrids and "add-ons" (according to them) that occurred in the 1960s and since. They are also known as "jazz purists."
 - b. Trumpeter Wynton Marsalis is at the forefront of this movement. He is an internationally acclaimed musician and has played a major role in the resurgence of jazz.
2. *Contemporary Mainstream* jazz artists are influenced mostly by Hard Bop sensibilities.
 - a. Contemporary mainstream jazz artists use, for the most part, Hard Bop instrumentation and musical forms.
 - b. However, within the Hard Bop framework, contemporary mainstream jazz artists continue to push the music forward, e.g., ever increasing technical proficiency on their instruments, expanded musical harmonies (more difficult and complex chords and chord progressions), and deeper and varied emotions expressed.
 - c. Trumpeter Sean Jones is one of today's most important contemporary mainstream jazz artists.
3. *"Anything Goes"* jazz artists will put all kinds of music into the pot and stir it up; these can include but are not limited to:
 - a. all styles of jazz
 - b. classical music (mostly of the 20th and 21st century variety)
 - c. world music (i.e., music from all over the world), especially South America and Asia
 - d. all styles of blues, rock, rhythm & blues, Latin, funk, hip-hop, ska, and popular music
 - e. Two important jazz musicians in the "anything goes" camp include saxophonist Dave Liebman and pianist Robert Glasper.

B. "Crossover" Artists

Many jazz artists today "cross over," that is, they are traditionalists, contemporary mainstream artists, **and** "anything goes" artists, playing different styles of jazz at different times. Three great ones are:

1. vibraphonist Stefon Harris
2. bassist Christian McBride
3. saxophonist Joshua Redman

C. Big Bands Today

Big bands (17-18-piece ensembles) are here to stay, not so much in the professional ranks (very few professional big bands exist), but in schools and amateur/community associations

1. There are thousands of secondary school and college/university big bands.
2. Repertoire consists of all styles of jazz from traditional big band swing to big band arrangements of bebop, cool, hard bop, fusion, and more; new arrangements are being written and performed all the time.

D. Non-Traditional Instrumentation

1. Besides the traditional "jazz instruments" (saxophone, trumpet, trombone, piano, bass, drums, guitar, human voice), jazz is increasingly being performed on non-traditional jazz instruments as well, especially violin. Two exceptional jazz violinists on the scene today are Regina Carter and Sara Caswell.
2. Today, jazz can also be heard on such "non-jazz" instruments as viola, cello, oboe, bassoon, and French Horn.

E. Women in Jazz

1. In the past, instrumental jazz has been primarily a male dominated art form; however, today more and more women are studying and performing jazz and becoming an integral part of the jazz scene.
2. Top female jazz artist on the scene today include:
 - a. Ingrid Jensen, trumpet
 - b. Tia Fuller, saxophone
 - c. Terri Lyne Carrington, drums
3. One of today's few steadily working professional big bands is an all female group: DIVA

F. Vocal Jazz

1. Jazz vocalists have always been an important part of jazz's rich history. Today, vocal jazz is not only important, it is credited with introducing jazz to many who might not otherwise have given jazz a chance. Because there are words, or lyrics, more people can relate to vocal jazz than instrumental jazz.
2. Popular jazz vocalists on the scene today include Dee Dee Bridgewater, Diana Krall, Gretchen Parlato, Dianne Reeves, and Cécile McLorin Salvant.

G. Impact of Technology

1. Downloading and streaming have become the dominant forms of music consumption; jazz has become more accessible through YouTube and streaming sites, giving a new generation of listeners the ability to discover a wider range of music at a quicker pace (of course, the best way to listen to jazz is still *live*).
2. Instructional videos online have become a major source of education for musicians.

H. Listening Examples

1. Geri Allen's *Dolphy's Dance*
2. Danilo Perez's *PanaMonk* (as in "Panama" and "Thelonious Monk")
3. any recent recordings of any of the aforementioned jazz artists

I. Cultural Implications

1. In the world, we have traditionalists, mainstreamers, and "anything goes" types of people
2. Jazz is better for its diversity, and so is the world.
3. As time goes on, diversity is increasingly accepted and cherished.

II. The Future of Jazz

A. Continuing Evolution of Jazz

1. Traditional, straight-ahead, contemporary mainstream, and acoustic jazz will continue to prosper. Up-and-coming young jazz musicians, inspired and influenced by blues, swing, bebop, and hard bop, will continue to push the musical envelope within the traditional acoustic jazz combo setting.
2. Big bands (i.e., 17-18-piece jazz ensembles) will continue to be prevalent in secondary schools, colleges, and universities. Repertoire will consist of jazz classics from the past as well as new compositions and arrangements that will continue to be written in the future.
3. New styles of jazz will increasingly include more 20th and 21st century classical music and world music. The line between jazz and improvised contemporary classical and world music may blur to the point where there is no longer a noticeable difference. This style of jazz will be difficult to label; rather than being called jazz, it might simply be called "improvised music."
4. Some new styles of jazz will increasingly incorporate technology. Computers and electronic instruments that we have not yet imagined will become part of jazz's future. Technology will increasingly allow people to create jazz (or at least a jazz-like music) without ever having to learn how to play a musical instrument.

B. How We Will Listen to Jazz

1. Just as compact discs (CDs) replaced vinyl records, MP3s have replaced CDs, and streaming is replacing MP3s, jazz will be listened to on new formats not yet invented.
2. Jazz will become easier and easier and less expensive for the consumer to obtain.
3. The BEST way to listen to jazz will continue to be listening to it *live* in jazz clubs, school auditoriums, concert halls, and jazz festivals worldwide.

C. Cultural Implications

1. Jazz will increasingly become a fixture in schools at all levels from primary school through college.
 - a. An increasing number of schools will offer jazz ensembles for credit.
 - b. Jazz will be introduced to and performed by even younger children (the trend has already begun as more primary schools add jazz bands to their music curriculum).
 - c. Jazz history will increasingly become a major area of study in history and social studies classes.
2. As more young people learn about jazz—its musical elements, rich history, and cultural implications—jazz will reach an even wider audience.
 - a. Since jazz speaks to the human condition and to people's hearts, it will increasingly be performed, listened to, enjoyed, analyzed, debated, and studied throughout the world.
 - b. Jazz will continue to serve as a reminder that differences between people are a good thing and, if channeled properly, can lead to a much greater good.