

An Introduction to Jazz

Grade 8 | 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:
 - a. what is occurring on the jazz scene today
 - b. what is likely to occur on the jazz scene in the near future
2. Listen to examples of several types of contemporary jazz

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 the styles of jazz that are being performed today
2. discuss the styles of jazz that are likely to be performed in the near future
3. play various recordings of current jazz artists

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. The Music

1. Today's jazz artists are basically going in one of three directions: traditional, contemporary mainstream, or "anything goes."
2. Traditionalists are performing jazz mainly associated with and reflective of blues, swing, bebop, and hard bop; in other words, they exclude Free Jazz and Fusion. (Note that the term "traditional jazz" is often used as a synonym for Dixieland or early jazz. However, in the context discussed here, a "jazz traditionalist" is someone who performs jazz primarily associated with and reflective of blues, swing, bebop, and hard bop, that is, jazz that was developed before 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; he currently serves as Artistic Director for New York's Jazz at Lincoln Center.
3. Contemporary mainstream jazz artists are influenced mostly by hard bop sensibilities.
 - a. 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.
 - b. trumpeter Sean Jones is one of today's most important contemporary mainstream jazz artists.
4. "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 other parts of the world), especially from South America and Asia
 - d. all styles of blues, rock, rhythm and blues, Latin, funk, hip-hop, ska, rap, and popular music
5. Two important jazz musicians in the "anything goes" camp include:
 - a. saxophonists Dave Liebman
 - b. pianist Robert Glasper
6. Several contemporary artists "cross over," that is, they can be traditionalists, contemporary mainstream artists, or "anything goes" artists, depending on the context in which they are playing; three great ones today include:
 - a. vibraphonist Stefon Harris
 - b. bassist Christian McBride
 - c. saxophonist Joshua Redman
7. Three of today's most eminent jazz musicians (who have been on the scene since the 1960s when they played with the Miles Davis Quintet) are:
 - a. Herbie Hancock
 - b. Wayne Shorter
 - c. Ron Carter
8. 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
 - a. there are thousands of secondary school and college/university big bands
 - b. repertoire consists of all styles of jazz from traditional big band swing to big band arrangements of bebop, cool, hard bop, and fusion. New arrangements are being written and performed all the time (as well as classics from the past).

9. 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. Today, jazz can also be heard on such "non-jazz" instruments as viola, cello, oboe, bassoon, and French Horn.
10. Women in Jazz
 - a. 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.
 - b. four of the top female jazz instrumentalists on the scene today are trumpeter Ingrid Jensen, clarinetist Anat Cohen, saxophonist Tia Fuller, and drummer Terri Lyne Carrington.
 - c. One of today's few steadily working professional big bands is an all-female group, DIVA
11. Vocal Jazz
 - a. 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, i.e., lyrics, more people can relate to vocal jazz than instrumental jazz.
 - b. popular jazz vocalists on the scene today include Dee Dee Bridgewater, Diana Krall, Gretchen Parlato, Dianne Reeves, Cecile McLorin Salvant, and Cassandra Wilson.
12. Impact of Technology
 - a. 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).
 - b. instructional videos online have become a major source of education for musicians.
13. Listen to recordings by today's jazz artists.
 - a. Geri Allen's *Dolphy's Dance*
 - b. Danilo Perez's *PanaMonk* (as in Panama and Thelonious Monk)

B. Cultural Implications

1. Today, jazz and jazz artists represent our society's diversity.
 - a. in our society, we have traditionalists, mainstreamers, and "anything goes" types.
 - b. jazz is better for its diversity, and so is the world.
 - c. as time goes on, diversity is more and more accepted and cherished.
2. Today, jazz education is increasingly important in schools throughout the world.
 - a. the study of jazz is increasingly important in understanding history, society, and culture.
 - b. jazz is found in classes of all levels from primary school to university.
 - c. it is now possible to earn undergraduate, graduate and even doctoral degrees in jazz studies at many prestigious universities.

II. Jazz Tomorrow – The Future of Jazz

A. The Music

1. Jazz, like the people, society, and cultures it reflects, is always evolving. While no one can predict with certainty where jazz is headed, jazz in the future is likely to include the following scenarios:
 - a. traditional, straight-ahead, and contemporary mainstream 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.
 - b. big bands (i.e., 17-18-piece jazz ensembles) will continue to be prevalent in secondary schools

all the way up to 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.

- c. 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.
 - d. 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.
2. Jazz will be recorded and listened to on formats we have not yet imagined.
 - a. just as compact discs (CDs) replaced vinyl records, and MP3s and streaming have replaced CDs, jazz will be listened to on new formats not yet invented.
 - b. jazz will continually become easier for the consumer to obtain; already more and more jazz is being downloaded from the Internet or simply “asked for” verbally via voice assistant devices like Amazon’s Alexa and Echo, Apple’s Siri, and Google’s Google Home.

B. Cultural Implications

1. Jazz will increasingly become a fixture in schools at all levels from secondary school through university.
 - 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 elementary and middle 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.