



C Jam Blues

(Duke's Place)
Duke Ellington



Music Selection

- Follows 12 bar blues form
- Simple - melody uses two notes. Very accessible all the while one of the greatest opportunities to teach improvisation ever created.
- Written by a MAJOR historical jazz musician and composer - Duke Ellington
- Opportunity to look at the “swing era” of jazz and origin of the Blues.

Background

“C Jam Blues” by Duke Ellington is a classic in jazz repertoire. It was composed in 1942 and has been performed by some of the world’s greatest jazz artists. The song is well-known for being extremely easy to perform, making it one of the first tunes a young jazz ensemble will learn. Many sources site the melody likely originating from Ellington’s clarinetist Barney Bigard in 1941, however this has not been validated. The work was also know as “Duke’s Place” with lyrics added by Bill Katts, Bob Thiele and Ruth Roberts.

The Blues is a form of music that originated in the Deep South around the end of the 19th century. It developed mostly from African-American work songs. It incorporaed work songs, field hollers, shouts, chants and spirituals. The blues form is well known for its call-and-response pattern and specific blues scale and 12 bar blues chord progression.

Analysis

Type: 12 bar blues that is played in an up-tempo swing.

Musical Elements

Form

The form is based on the 12 bar blues. This piece offers a wonderful opportunity for young musicians to discover the 12 bar blues. The music also presents the concept of playing the head, then solos, then returning to the head. The piece can end with a standard “tag” ending on the final two measures of the head.

Rhythm

The head consists for the most part of pairs of eighth notes on beats 1 and then 1 and 3. In the third measure contains a dotted quarter note on the tonic followed by the eighth note on the dominant. Why so few notes? I believe that the beauty of this piece lies in the space between the notes. The rhythmic figure used helps to create your own rhythm section becoming almost a percussive device. The dotted quarter note eighth note figure at the end of the melody actually helps to catapult the return of the melody again while providing the space and time to interject your own ideas.

Melody

The melody is just two notes: C and G (In C Major). However, what is important to consider is that the G only occurs on the very last note of the melody. This repetition contains pent up energy. The G provides motion and a harmonic push to repeat the entire melody again.

Harmony

The harmony of “C Jam” follows a basic 12 bar blues pattern – I, I, IV, I, IV, IV, I, I, V, V, I, I.

Texture/Timbre

There are many arrangements of C Jam available for many different groupings of instruments. We are transcribing the piece so texture and timbre will be the result of added backgrounds during the performance.

Expression

- This piece is based on a two-groove feel. Therefore, the tempo needs to remain around 180. Articulation should be as suggested below:

C-JAM BLUES, BY DUKE ELLINGTON



- The guitar part is to be played in the fashion of the legendary guitarist Freddie Green from the Count Basie Orchestra – quarter notes on every beat with accents on the backbeats (beats 2 and 4). The other members of the rhythm section have written parts but are encouraged to explore other possibilities.
- Listening to recordings of this style is important for all players. Much of the expression in jazz is not communicated in the written form, but through listening and feel.

Other Compositional Devices

- Tailgating with the trombones – traditional device that can be added
- Creation of new backgrounds – traditional and can be added.

The Heart

C Jam’s beauty lies in its simplistic melodic line consisting of exactly two notes perfectly placed creating a feeling of space enticing the performer to unleash his or her improvisatory ideas, personality and deepest emotions.

Introducing The Piece

As students come into the classroom have the history of the blues playing

<https://youtu.be/fjHDI8lgOls?list=PLerk8wCJ-HBOZrt0y0-aPrY-XVr6Vvrle>

Ask students what they noticed about this music? What did all the recordings seem to have in common?

Skill Outcome

Students will demonstrate basic jazz inflections (pitch bending and vibrato) on their instrument.

Strategies

1. Blues Scale Review - review the standard blues scale with call and response. (1, b3, 4, #4, 5, b7)
2. Blues Pentatonic - introduce pentatonic blues (5, 6, 1, 2, b3) and when to use it.

3. Selling Inflection: What does “inflection” mean? Watch this video and then have a discussion about the concept. https://youtu.be/_8UYCo7-fqY?list=PLerk8wCJ-HBOZrt0y0-aPrY-XVr6VvrIe
4. Blues Inflection 101: Watch a lesson on Blues Inflection by Marcus Printup: https://youtu.be/h7vkdHOESHs?list=PLerk8wCJ-HBNfQWsHaL-CbCD7M8htEI_J
5. Pitch Bending:
 - a. Brass - mouthpiece first then with the instrument - bend down a half step then a whole step with a piano. Try singing it.
 - b. Woodwind - mouthpiece first then with the instrument - bend down a half step then a whole step with a piano. Try singing it. Use fingers to aid with half-key. Watch this video for more ideas: <https://youtu.be/GpwAo-Wpiq0?list=PLerk8wCJ-HBOZrt0y0-aPrY-XVr6VvrIe>
6. Vibrato:
 - a. Brass/Woodwind (except flute) - move your jaw very slowly up and down while playing. Practice very slowly and then get faster.
 - b. Watch videos on vibrato on YouTube and imitate them!
7. Identify What You Hear: Listen to this vintage recording of two legends - Sinatra and Armstrong https://youtu.be/7sYdUGoIqUM?list=PLerk8wCJ-HBNfQWsHaL-CbCD7M8htEI_J

Assessment

1. Diagnostic - Before starting the unit I will ask students to show me using fist to five how confident they feel using vibrato and pitch bending, etc. I also have had many of these students in 6th grade so I am aware of their current abilities.
2. Formative - Through our discussions and the students exploring the different techniques, I will be able to determine how the students are progressing.
3. Summative - With a partner, use the 12 bar blues play along and perform a 12 bar solo using pitch bending and vibrato. Record the performance using your Chromebooks and send it to Mr. Gleason. Assess each other using the jazz inflection rubric. Be sure to use both blues scales at the appropriate time.

Knowledge Outcome

Students will analyze and describe the use of form and harmony through active listening.

Strategies

1. The Hook -What is the Blues?
 - a. Here’s Johnny: Watch the “Johnny B Good” clip from the movie *Back to the Future*. Discuss who has heard this before and what genre of music it falls into. https://youtu.be/S1i5coU-0_Q?list=PLerk8wCJ-HBNfQWsHaL-CbCD7M8htEI_J
 - b. Count how many measures used. (use hands counting to 10 and two feet to twelve)
 - c. Review harmony (write numbers on sheet)
 - d. 12 Bar Blues Review - Play the tonic for each chord. (write letter on sheet)
2. Dance Fun
 - a. Watch “Roll Over Beethoven” https://youtu.be/kT3kCVFFLNg?list=PLerk8wCJ-HBNfQWsHaL-CbCD7M8htEI_J
 - b. Create 12 bar actions on a grid (surf, swim, lasso, walk, super hero,) and jump at the beginning of the form.
 - c. Do an action for each chord.
3. Map It Out - listen to recording and map it out using the worksheet.
 - a. <https://youtu.be/gOlpcJhNyDI?list=PLerk8wCJ-HBOZrt0y0-aPrY-XVr6VvrIe>
 - i. Head (12)
 - ii. Piano Solo/ Sax Head (12)
 - iii. Piano Solo/ Sax Head (12)
 - iv. Violin Break (4) then (12)

- v. Trumpet Break (4) then (12)
- vi. Sax Break (4) then (12)
- vii. Trombone Break (4) then (12)
- viii. Clarinet Break (4) then (12) w/ band back-up
- ix. Drum (12)
- x. All (12)

Assessment –

1. Diagnostic - During our 12 bar blues warm-up I will observe who enters in at the top of the form and who looks lost.
2. Formative - I will pay attention to each of the students during the strategies looking for comprehension and understanding.
3. Summative - YOUR TURN TO MAP IT - Select one or more to map and turn in!
 - a. Oscar Peterson: Start at 2:38.
<https://youtu.be/NTJhHn-TuDY?list=PLerk8wCJ-HBOZrt0y0-aPrY-XVr6VvrIe>
 - b. Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra:
<https://youtu.be/mSBmMswu17k?list=PLerk8wCJ-HBOZrt0y0-aPrY-XVr6VvrIe>
 - c. Wycliffe Gordon: <https://youtu.be/epHkaOxZhV8?list=PLerk8wCJ-HBOZrt0y0-aPrY-XVr6VvrIe>
 - d. Duke Ellington and Louis Armstrong:
<https://youtu.be/k6UulQUibHM?list=PLerk8wCJ-HBOZrt0y0-aPrY-XVr6VvrIe>
 - e. Ella Fitzgerald: <https://youtu.be/osI1QoRgxiU?list=PLerk8wCJ-HBOZrt0y0-aPrY-XVr6VvrIe>
 - f. Barney Bigard: <https://youtu.be/mZRce0Oa790?list=PLerk8wCJ-HBOZrt0y0-aPrY-XVr6VvrIe>
 - g. Les Paul: <https://youtu.be/jFMNvHPM9yE?list=PLerk8wCJ-HBOZrt0y0-aPrY-XVr6VvrIe>

Affective Outcome

Students will explore how music can both reflect and affirm life.

Strategies

1. History
 - a. Reporters - Take article. Get “headlines” to share with the rest of the group. Where did the blues come from? Jigsaw using Blues Article.
 - b. Watch first five minutes of <https://youtu.be/QQX87oO-kyI>
2. Discussion Questions
 - a. How did the blues begin?
 - b. How did the music reflect what was going on in the world?
 - c. What was the topic of many of the blues songs?
3. Lyrics to blues tunes can give you insight into the emotions of those singing. What do you notice?
4. What do you notice about the form of the lyrics? How does it compare to the form of music?

a. **Stormy Monday - T Bone Walker / Allman Brothers**

<https://youtu.be/KphVMfNO18M>

They call it stormy Monday,
but Tuesday's just as bad
They call it stormy Monday,
but Tuesday's just as bad
Lord and Wednesday's worse,
Thursday's oh so sad

The eagle flies on Friday,
Saturday I go out to play
The eagle flies on Friday,
Saturday I go out to play
Sunday I go to church,
I get down to pray

Lord have mercy, lord have mercy on me
Lord have mercy, lord have mercy on me
You know I tryin', tryin' to find my baby
Please send her on home to me

b. "Texas Flood" <https://youtu.be/boule-ihcoY>

Stevie Ray Vaughn

**Well there's floodin' down in Texas
All of the telephone lines are down
Well there's floodin' down in Texas
All of the telephone lines are down
And I've been tryin' to call my baby
Lord and I can't get a single sound**

**Well dark clouds are rollin' in
Man I'm standin' out in the rain
Well dark clouds are rollin' in
Man I'm standin' out in the rain
Yeah flood water keep a rollin'
Man it's about to drive poor me insane**

**Well I'm leavin' you baby
Lord and I'm goin' back home to stay
Well I'm leavin' you baby
Lord and I'm goin' back home to stay
Well back home are no floods or tornados
Baby and the sun shines every day**

c. C Jam Lyrics:

Baby, take me down to Duke's Place
Wildest box in town is Duke's Place
Love that piano sound in Duke's Place

Saxes do their tricks in Duke's Place
Fellas swing their chicks in Duke's Place
Come on, get your kicks in Duke's Place

You find yourself a seat, and when you want to eat
You look around and yell, "Waiter"
You fill your cup chock full of dreams and drink it up
You're jetting along with your girlie

It's after three o'clock, but baby, it's early
If you've never been to Duke's Place
Take your tootsies into Duke's Place
Life is in a spin in Duke's Place

Baby, take me down to Duke's Place
Wildest box in town is Duke's Place
Love that piano sound in Duke's Place

Saxes do their tricks in Duke's Place
Fellas swing their chicks in Duke's Place
Come on, get your kicks in Duke's Place

d. Create your own blues lyrics.

Assessment –

1. Diagnostic - I will ask students to self reflect on what they know about the blues and the meaning behind the music. We will discuss as this will lead us into the conversation.
2. Formative - I will read the student's journals as much of this is probably private.
3. Summative - I will ask the students to use what we have discussed and to show me this emotion in their playing. This is the most authentic of assessments and the ultimate goal!