

**WPT Project for 2017 WMEA Music Standards -- Aimee Swanson**  
**No. 4 - Secondary Choir**

## Creativity and Improvisation: Letting Music Free Your Soul

“Find something and let it make joy in your heart.”- Al Jarreau. Famous jazz musician and Milwaukee native Al Jarreau returned to Wisconsin during the fall of 2016 to work with students and receive the Wisconsin Foundation for School Music’s lifetime achievement award. Known as the “acrobat of scat” Al Jarreau gave words of wisdom to students and educators alike. He encouraged all to use their experience and wisdom and use their skills to help them be free. Help your students experience creative freedom with guided improvisation activities.

**Target:** High school or upper middle school choir

### **Descriptive Paragraph:**

The Wisconsin Public Television video “Al Jarreau: Coming Home” highlights the accomplishments of the jazz musician and his time spent in Wisconsin. Using the video as an inspirational introduction, this lesson suggests pieces and activities designed to help students explore improvisation, finding their voice, and freeing their soul.

### **WMEA Music Standards:**

This curriculum guide corresponds with the following WMEA Music Standards:

#### **Artistic Process *CREATE*:**

##### **Enduring Understandings --**

The creative ideas, concepts, and feelings that influence musicians’  
work emerge from a variety of sources.

Musicians evaluate, and refine their work through openness to new ideas, persistence,  
and the application of appropriate criteria.

#### **Performance standard (sample): IMAGINE**

Compose and improvise ideas for melodies and  
rhythmic passages based on characteristic(s) of  
music or text(s) studied in rehearsal.

MU:Cr1.1.E.8a

Other performance standards to consider:

Plan and make- MU:Cr2.1.E.8b

Evaluate and refine- MU:Cr3.1.E.1a

Present- MU:Cr3.2.E.1a

**Artistic Process: PERFORM:**

**Enduring Understandings --**

Analyzing creators' context and how they manipulate elements of music provides insight into their intent and informs performance.

Performers make interpretive decisions based on their understanding of context and expressive intent.

Performance standards sample: INTERPRET

Demonstrate an understanding of context in a varied repertoire of music through prepared and improvised performances.

MU:Pr4.3.E.1a

Other performance standards to consider:

Present- MU:Pr6.1.E.1a

**Artistic Process: CONNECT**

**Enduring Understandings --**

Musicians connect their personal interests, experiences, ideas, and knowledge to creating, performing, and responding

Understanding connections to varied contexts and daily life enhances musicians creating, performing, and responding.

Performance standards sample: PERSONALIZE

Demonstrate how interests, knowledge, and skills relate to personal choices and intent when creating, performing, and responding to music.

MU:Cn10.1.E.1c-W1

Other performance standards to consider:

Broaden- MU:Cn11.1.E.1a-W

## GETTING STARTED:

- Start a circle song with students. Give a starting ostinato to a section. Either give other sections complimentary ostinato patterns or let students find a pattern and “add” classmates around him/her into the pattern
- Improvise on top of the patterns for demonstration, then invite students into the circle to trade back and forth with the instructor and each other.
- Discuss the experience and ask leading questions into improvisation choices.

## STRATEGIES:

- Watch the video about Al Jarreau returning to Milwaukee. Discuss inspiration in regards to improvisation and creation.
- Improvisation exploration project
  - Students create small group circle songs
- OR
  - Students listen and compare various jazz artists (vocal and instrumental) and their improvisation. Then choose a jazz standard to sing and improvise (use James Aebersold books on WSMA vocal jazz improvisation list)
- OR
  - Students learn the basic 12 bar blues on various instruments and improvise on a 12 bar blues pattern. Challenge the choir to find a walking bass and chordal patterns to create the 12 bar blues for another singer to improvise over
- OR
  - Students explore creating and improvising lyrics not just scat. Sing a familiar tune but add stories or life experiences to the tune
- Study a vocal jazz piece that incorporates an improvisation section and have a “Trade off” day where choir members take turns improvising.
- Go “Off roading”- take circle groups to staff meetings, school board meetings, community groups, or choir concerts and create a circle song with those in the audience. Encourage students to create not just scat but poignant ostinato statements the students want to share.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES (Video/Audio/Print)-

Al Jarreau video

<https://wisconsinperforms.org/al-jarreau-coming-home/>

Literature ideas-

- Middle School
  - Blue Skies arr. Roger Emerson (encourage original improv solo, not what is written)
  - Summertime arr. Roger Emerson (encourage original improv solo, not what is written)
  - Zemabiah, Kerry Marsh
- High School

- Boogie Down arr Paris Rutherford
- Orange Colored Sky arr. Jeremy Fox

Circle Song example-

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gJNgUdH0ijQ>

## **ASSESSMENTS:**

Performance- Community performances and choral concerts

Project- Completion and reflection of improvisation project

Writing- Reflection on others and one's own performance of improvisation

Discussion- Class discussion and group collaboration