

LEARNING LINKS

**JazzReach:
Hangin' With
the Giants**

WEDNESDAY
OCTOBER 21 2015
9:30 AM

2015 > 2016

BROADEN THE HORIZONS
OF YOUR CLASSROOM.
EXPERIENCE THE VIBRANT
WORLD OF THE ARTS
AT THE McCALLUM!



McCallum Theatre Institute
Field Trip Series



McCALLUM THEATRE INSTITUTE
PRESENTS

JazzReach: Hangin' With the Giants

WEDNESDAY
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9:30 AM

“If jazz means anything,
it is freedom
of expression.”

“Duke” Ellington

Connecting to Curriculum and Students' Lives!

HISTORY • Twentieth-Century America, African-Americans

GEOGRAPHY • American cities

ARTS • Music in general and specifically jazz music

THEMES • Collaboration, improvisation

Expanding the Concept of Literacy

What is a “text”? We invite you to consider the performances on McCallum’s Field Trip Series as non-print texts available for study and investigation by your students. Anyone who has shown a filmed version of a play in their classroom, used a website as companion to a textbook, or asked students to do online research already knows that “texts” don’t begin and end with textbooks, novels, and reading packets. They extend to videos, websites, games, plays, concerts, dances, radio programs, and a number of other non-print texts that students and teachers engage with on a regular basis.

We know that when we expand our definition of texts to the variety of media that we use in our everyday lives, we broaden the materials and concepts we have at our disposal in the classroom, increase student engagement, and enrich learning experiences.

Please consider how utilizing your McCallum performance as a text might align to standards established for reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language.

How do we help students to use these texts as a way of shaping ideas and understanding the world?

Please use this material to help you on this journey.

NON-PRINT TEXT • any medium/text that creates meaning through sound or images or both, such as symbols, words, songs, speeches, pictures, and illustrations not in traditional print form including those seen on computers, films, and in the environment.

The Work of Art

A Non-print Text for Study

- What's it made of? How can this work serve as a *Common Core State Standards*-mandated "text" for student study in the classroom?



Hey, remember that great old show they had on T.V. back before cable, back in the day? Sure you remember. Back when everyone you knew tuned in to the same three networks – and the buzz around the cooler the following day was all “Did you hear –?” and “Did you see –?” And what was it that had been seen and heard? Well, Thelonious Monk had come on the show to promote his latest album, and did you get a look at what he had on his head??? And after that, on strode the “Duke” – that’s right, Ellington – and did he ever make those eighty-eight keys jump! Of course, that was right before ol’ Sachmo popped in and coaxed heaven out of his horn. And then making a rare appearance in just as rare form, Mr. Charlie Parker arrived, looking like every note he played he had just thought of. And let’s don’t forget Mr. Charisma himself, Miles Davis giving Ellington a run for his money when it came to the cool and elegant. And wait – wasn’t there someone else? Oh yeah, Dizzy Gillespie tearing through those bebop lines like his soul was on fire. I mean, that was quite the lineup, wouldn’t you say? Oh those were the days. No way you would see something like that on the television today because, as everyone knows – Excuse me, what? What’s that you say? No such program? The whole thing made up out of sheer imagination? Well, my dear friend, what you say may be so, if we’re speaking of the past. But what would you say if we told you that just such a show is on its way to the McCallum this season! That’s right!! Clever, imaginative and passionate conservators of jazz – of course we’re speaking of JazzReach – who have cooked up a show just like the one we’ve described. These musicians, sporting depth of knowledge allied with a spark of fun, have put together, for viewing on the big screen, colorful animated versions of the greats, oops I mean, the giants. And in this breezy, informative talk show format, who does the hangin’? Why, that would be us of course!

The Artists

- Who has *produced* this text for study?

“Our mission is to
make jazz accessible.”

JazzReach

JAZZREACH AND THEIR RESIDENT ENSEMBLE METTA QUINTET

Suppose you loved something so much you were willing, even driven, to devote your life to sharing it with others. Maybe you already do this? If so, then you already have some insight into how H. Benjamin Schuman feels. Some time ago, this enterprising drummer sold the piano his dying grandmother left for him and with the proceeds he got a logo, an address and a business name. He was bent on building an organization that could bring jazz to youngsters. A bold act, if you ask us. This visionary labored in the wilderness, so to speak, for five years, with just his logo and an unyielding zeal for writing letters and applying for grants. At last, something happened. The ASCAP Foundation came through with a \$5,000 grant. JazzReach was born! Right away it swung into action with its first presentation – *Get Hip!*

Perhaps you even recall that show from a few seasons ago? Here's the recipe: add multimedia elements to one jazz quintet, stir in Schuman's pithy instruction, and voila! You have a kid-friendly entry into that most American of music genres: jazz.

Schuman himself, a native of Lansing, Michigan, first began to thump a drumhead when he was all of 13. In those heady days, a high school education included thorough musical training, and he availed himself of the opportunity. After a stint at Berklee College of Music, he entered into a career as a working musician. The rest of his story you already know.

THE GIANTS



LOUIS ARMSTRONG (1901-1971)

He was "Pops" to generations of Americans who bought his records and tuned in regularly to hear him wail away on his horn – or lift his inimitable voice in song. That voice that was like crushed gravel on a melodic line – warm, stylish, recognizable. He was also "Satchmo." How many folks do you know who go by two nicknames? Yet you only had to hear either of those monikers and you knew at once who was meant – Louis Armstrong! Similarly, there was never any question who was singing, as soon as you heard the sound. "My whole life has been happiness," he famously said. He had such an unassuming way about him that you could be forgiven for failing to note the huge impact he'd had on jazz. Born "dirt" poor in New Orleans, by the 1920s he had landed a spot in the Fletcher Henderson band. There he launched his own super-syncopated version of the 4/4 rhythm, which led to the development of big band swing! Trumpet player Max Kaminsky said of Armstrong that he was "the heir of all that had gone before and the father of all that was to come."



"DUKE" ELLINGTON (1889-1974)

The "Duke" wrote nearly 2,000 compositions in his fecund career, and leading the orchestras that played these might just have been his greatest gift to the world. However, he could tickle the ivories with an élan few will ever match. One thing though: he chaffed at categorization. Was it classical? Was it jazz? Do you want love songs? Dance tunes? Ballet scores? Movie music? Orchestral pieces? Tone poems? Choral works? His compositional pen took him wherever he cared to go exploring. And to those who pigeonholed him as a black musician, he conceded that his output mined "Negro feeling put to rhythm and tune" – but expanded on this to say that his was also the music of America, and of the human race.



CHARLIE "BIRD" PARKER (1920-1955)

"The first time I heard Bird play," said John Coltrane, "it hit me right between the eyes." Bird, of course, was sax player and composer Charlie Parker. Growing up in Missouri, he fell under the sway of Lester Young. By the end of WWII, he and Dizzy Gillespie had put together a quartet that gave birth to bebop. Ultimately what made Bird great was his phrasing. Said Gillespie, "He had just what we needed. He had the line and he had the rhythm. We heard him and knew the music had to go his way."



"DIZZY" GILLESPIE (1917-1993)

Gillespie was no slouch when it came to trailblazing either. Some theorize that it was at the family dinner table that this youngest of nine children learned what speed and humor could get you. "You only have so many notes," said Dizzy, "and what makes a style is how you get from one note to another." On his trumpet he liked playing high, hard, and fast. As JazzReach tells it, it was the way he strung notes together that earned him his place in the pantheon. He was also a visionary with the ability to reach across physical and conceptual boundaries. He and conga master Chano Pozo unleashed some pretty amazing blends of jazz and Afro-Cuban rhythms on the world. This developing of community may be what he had in mind when he claimed for music the power to "help set things right."



MILES DAVIS (1926-1991)

"The difference between me and other musicians is that I've got charisma." Miles Davis didn't hesitate to say what was on his mind, and if it didn't sit well with everyone, well, it was the music he made that mattered in the end. And what music it was! He saw his special gift as that of putting the right folks together and letting them do what they knew how to do. His combos — with ingredients such as John Coltrane and Gil Evans — sure knew how to cook! His 1959 album *Kind of Blue* remains a must-have choice on many listeners' jazz lists.



THELONIOUS MONK (1917-1982)

Thelonious Monk was another figure who didn't hold back from causing controversy. After all, in Mr. Monk's own words, "a genius is one who is most like himself." At the end of the day, he was just being himself. Sometimes that meant inserting wild dances into the middle of sets, sometimes there were long silences within pieces and sometimes that meant just donning curious head gear. But when he released *Brilliant Corners* in 1957, the jazz world sat up and took notice. John Coltrane called him, "a musical architect of the highest order."

**"You only have so many notes,
and what makes a style is how you get from
one note to another."**

Dizzy Gillespie

Contexts

- What *information* surrounds this text for study & could help make students' engagement with it more powerful?

The first question might be hardest of all to answer – and that's because almost everyone who thinks he or she knows something about jazz, will come up with a somewhat different definition. Jazz is that big and that encompassing. Webster's says that jazz is characterized by propulsive syncopated rhythms, polyphonic ensemble playing, varying degrees of improvisation, and often deliberate distortions of pitch and timbre. This is fine if you're a trained musician and know what all those words mean. Contemporary great Wynton Marsalis says that

jazz is music that swings, and if that makes sense to us, let's go with it!

Origins will be interesting to trace down. Let's take a trip through history starting, alas, with a not very happy or proud chapter. We refer to the climax of the Atlantic slave trade which, by the first decade of the 1800s, had relocated half a million Sub-Saharan Africans to the U.S. They brought a wealth of musical traditions with them, the rhythms of which echoed speech patterns, which meant that some parts were on the beat and some off. It was striking, too, that African music was melody only – no harmony. This latter component the new residents encountered in church hymns, and they soon put it to use in pieces of their own: spirituals. They also learned to play European instruments, and following the Civil War, drums and fifes became available. This combination made a big hit in the black community and featured a liberal dose of syncopation. Of course, with the freeing of the slaves, a huge workforce materialized. Quite a wide range of jobs were off limits however. Many African-Americans at that point turned to entertaining as a livelihood. Black pianists played clubs and saloons. Vaudeville was developing, and many blacks found work in theaters as minstrels. Marching bands were another option. By the end of the century Scott Joplin had published his *Maple Leaf Rag*, and the phenomenon of ragtime went international. Talk about off the beat and harmonies that jolted! Even some of the more experimental oldies from the classical world got on the bandwagon; Impressionistic French composer Claude Debussy and Russian enfant terrible Igor Stravinsky put out rags of their own.

Well, while ragtime was catching fire in citadels like Chicago and New York, the blues were developing in the Deep South. Based to some extent on work songs, spirituals, and chants, these new pieces wailed with pentatonic-inspired blue notes and heart-on-sleeve emotionalism. Blue notes are notes sung or played flat – and they came out of the chord progressions specific to the genre. Coronet player W. C. Handy, hearing an early song of this sort, refashioned what he could recall of it, adding his own genius of course, into St. Louis Blues. The blues would have a lasting impact on Western harmony and allow for staggering complexity in jazz.

New Orleans played quite a role in these emergent musical forms, particularly jazz itself. In some of the less, ahem, polite parts of town, amazing things were happening musically. Afro-Creoles like Jelly Roll Morton were infusing the home-grown music with exotic things like the habanera, really shaking it up rhythm-wise. Morton was one of those musicians who was building bridges between blues and jazz. He could play both, and boy did he swing! Swing is something this pianist-composer lifted up to a place of prominence and is a crucial ingredient of jazz. Swing is... – well, once again folks are challenged when it comes to agreeing on a definition. Louis Armstrong said about swing, "If you don't feel it, you'll never know it," and maybe we should leave it there.

In the 1920s, Prohibition settled in. Drinking was outlawed, and speakeasies came to be. This era is known as the Jazz Age, and as you can imagine jazz was the music du jour! Actually, it was a pretty jazzy time in many ways, and not everyone – particularly the stodgy guardians of moral rectitude – was enthusiastic about the new music. By 1924, Satchmo was already blazing those trails we mentioned a little earlier, and this brings us then up to the era of all those giants we've been hangin' with.

To get ready for the performance, students could research these:

- Jazz – collaboration, improvisation, syncopation and musical elements
- Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Dizzy Gillespie, Charlie Parker, Miles Davis and Thelonious Monk

Here's a 60 minute lesson* in collaboration & problem-solving you could teach to help prepare students for this work:

Line of Inquiry* How does JazzReach use the talk show format of interviewer and artist to explore the ideas and music of jazz greats?

ASK: WHAT IS JAZZ?

Share a short list:

- African-American origin
- Is partly planned and partly improvised (made up at the moment)
- Is syncopated (off the beat)
- Began in the South
- Can change the mood of a song (an up-tempo or fast song can become a ballad or slower song, for example)

CONTEXT: In the show we're going to see that JazzReach uses the talk show format to help us learn about six of the most important jazz players. Their names are Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Dizzy Gillespie, Charlie Parker, Miles Davis and Thelonious Monk.

TAKE-HOME PROJECT: Each table group gets the name of one of these artists. At home, with parental guidance, each student researches that artist, discovering what they find most interesting biographically and musically – and make a written list of these findings.

ART MAKING (LANGUAGE ARTS): The following day, each member of a table group shares with the group the information they've collected. With the classroom teacher's guidance, each table group then collaboratively creates a one page script (as if for a talk show) in which an interviewer and the artist converse. A simple diagram on the board (question, answer, question, answer) might help.

These are shared aloud.

FINAL REFLECTIVE QUESTION: What are some of the things we're learning about jazz?

**A Line of Inquiry is an Essential Question that generates a lesson*

After coming to the theater, students could research these:

- Collaboration
- Improvisation
- Syncopation

Here's a 45-60 minute lesson you could teach after students have experienced the work:

Facilitate a discussion of the performance by having students describe everything they saw and heard.

ASK: How did they do the talk show format? How did the projections work? How were musical examples, information, and images integrated? How did the musicians collaborate? How could you tell they were improvising? How did the performers interact with the audience? What new information about the "giants" did you learn? Why were they giants? Any surprises in the show? Why do you think JazzReach created this show in this way?

GROUP BRAINSTORM: JazzReach used animated projections to present the giants. How else could we "perform" our one-page talk show interviews? (Act it out; draw it in the style of a graphic novel; or...?)

ART MAKING: Each table group comes up with a presentation of their talk show script, based on the possibilities discussed. The group creates it and then presents it.

FINAL REFLECTION: Each student writes a paragraph: "Why the way we presented our script was an effective way to do that?"

What's *your* read of this non-print text?

How would you answer these questions – and how could they be adapted as Guiding Questions to spark student discussion?

- What pieces were played? In what order? What sequencing ideas seemed in operation? What about transitions between numbers?
- Who played which instrument?
- How did musicians communicate with each other?
- Was there a sense of leadership? Who provided this and how?
- Could you hear evidence of improvisation? What were the clues? How would you characterize those parts of the playing when improvisation did not seem to be happening?
- How were the ideas of interaction and collaboration used here?
- How did JazzReach get the audience actively involved? What purposes might be behind those strategies?

- What educational methods were used in the performance?
- How was multimedia used?
- In what ways was the central concept – that of a talk show – effective? What do you think the performers were after and what was achieved?
- What information really struck you about the giants?
- What made these legendary musicians giants?
- How was showmanship used?
- How were the musicians set up in the stage space – and why that way?
- What effect did the audience have on the performers?
- What are some adjectives that describe their playing?
- What value does this format of program have?
- What made the strongest impression on you – and what left you wanting to know more?

Internet

Super jazz site

www.pbs.org/jazz/

This PBS site offers fun, informative info in connection with Ken Burn's acclaimed documentary. A special section called JazzKids is designed just for students.

Big band era jazz for kids

www.bobethomas.com/history/history_big_band_kids.htm

Official Ellington website

www.dukeellington.com/

Dizzy Gillespie biography

www.pbs.org/jazz/biography/artist_id_gillespie_dizzy.htm

Detailed biography and audio samples.

Miles Davis facts

<http://kidsmusiccorner.co.uk/composers/jazz/miles-davis/>

Charlie Parker – "Bird" lives!

<http://www.birdlives.co.uk/>

An absolutely awesome, massive and nicely laid out site dedicated to all things "Bird." Note: Parker struggled with, and ultimately succumbed to, drug addiction. This subject, as it comes up, will need sensitive guidance from an adult.

Internet

Louis "Satchmo" Armstrong

www.redhotjazz.com/louie.html

Biography, names, dates, places, discography and filmography.

Thelonius Monk

<http://kidsmusiccorner.co.uk/composers/jazz/thelonious-monk/>

Books

Jazz

By: Walter Dean Myers

Reading level: Ages 4–8

Publisher: Holiday House (2008)

ISBN-10: 0823421732

Who Was Louis Armstrong?

By: Yona Zeldis McDonough

Reading level: Ages 8 and up

Publisher: Grosset & Dunlap (December 2004)

ISBN-10: 0448433680

If I Only Had a Horn: Young Louis Armstrong

By: Roxane Orgill

Reading level: Ages 4–8

Publisher: HMH Books for Young Readers (August 2002)

ISBN-10: 061825076X

Dizzy

By: Jonah Winter

Reading level: Ages 4–8

Publisher: Arthur A. Levine Books (October 2006)

ISBN-10: 0439507375

Duke Ellington: His Life in Jazz with 21 Activities

By: Stephanie Stein Crease

Reading level: Ages 9 and up

Publisher: Chicago Review Press; 1 edition (February 2009)

ISBN-10: 1556527241

Books

Charlie Parker Played Bebop

By: Christopher Raschka

Reading level: Ages 4 - 8

Publisher: Scholastic; Reprint edition (September 1, 1997)

ISBN-10: 0531070956

Miles Davis (Black Americans of Achievement)

By: Ron Frankel

Reading level: Ages 11 and up

Publisher: Chelsea House Publications (May 1995)

ISBN-10: 0791021564

Mysterious Thelonious

By: Chris Raschka

Reading level: Ages 6 and up

Publisher: Orchard Books; First Edition edition (September 1997)

ISBN-10: 0531300579

CDs

Essential Louis Armstrong

Label: Sony (August 2004)

ASIN: B0002JE8WU

This 2-CD set impressively boils down one of the most brilliant and lengthy careers in music.

Bird and Diz

Artists: Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Thelonius Monk

Label: Verve (July 1997)

ASIN: B0002JE8WU

This date from June 6, 1950, was an unusual one for Charlie Parker. He chose to play with fellow bop creators Dizzy Gillespie and Thelonius Monk, in a striking reunion with the trumpeter and the only occasion on which Parker recorded with the pianist.

Town Hall, New York City, June 22, 1945

Artists: Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker

Label: Uptown Jazz (June 2005)

ASIN: B0009Q0EQ0

This is a live concert recording of Dizzy and Bird from Town Hall not previously known to have been recorded.

CDS

Kind of Blue

Artist: Miles Davis

Label: Sony (March 1997)

ASIN: B000002ADT

This is the one jazz record owned by people who don't listen to jazz!

Essential Duke Ellington

Label: Sony (June 2005)

ASIN: B0009RQSC8

This is the ultimate 2-CD look at one of the best composers, jazzmen AND bandleaders ever.

Brilliant Corners

Artist: Thelonious Monk

Label: Riverside (March 2008)

ASIN: B0012S59ZU

Such an iconic album, no surprise it was inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame.

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“ Don't play what's there,
play what's not there.”

Miles Davis