

NYSSMA MUSIC VIEWS

Standards-Based Teaching & Learning Across the State



Lesson Plan for NYSSMA Music Views

Name: Diane Abrahamian

Title: Introduction to Vocal Jazz Improvisation

Level

- Elementary
- ✓ Middle School
- ✓ High School

Content Area

- Band
- ✓ Chorus
- Classroom
- Orchestra

Objective

To develop a basic understanding of vocal jazz improvisation utilizing common jazz rhythms, articulations and scat syllables, and applying this knowledge to create melodic/rhythmic ideas based on the Blues scale in a swing style. A variety of exercises are introduced sequentially. These activities will develop listening skills, a greater understanding and vocabulary of basic jazz rhythms and corresponding scat syllables, promote reading skills, a greater sense of style, creativity, compositional skills and self-confidence.

The NYS Learning Standard(s) this lesson will address...

- ✓ Creating, Performing and Participating in the Arts
- ✓ Knowing and Using Arts Materials and Resources
- ✓ Responding to and Analyzing Works of Art
- ✓ Understanding the Cultural Dimensions and Contributions of the Arts

National Standards for Music Education this lesson...

- ✓ Singing – alone and with others – a varied repertoire of music
- Performing on instruments – alone and with others – a varied repertoire of music
- ✓ Improvising melodies, variations and accompaniments
- ✓ Composing and arranging music within specific guidelines
- ✓ Reading and notating music
- ✓ Listening to, analyzing and describing music
- ✓ Evaluating music and music performances
- Understanding relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts
- Understanding music in relation to history and culture

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Instructional Ideas

1. Students will be introduced to the swing style by clapping a repeated triplet rhythm in 4/4 time, then omitting the middle note of the triplet, maintaining a laid-back groove.
2. Students will begin to develop a "scat vocabulary" through participating in call and response rhythms in a swing style. The syllables should reflect the rhythmic articulations.
3. Students will create their own call and response rhythmic motives using scat syllables. Their peers will perform the "response."
4. Students will compose "Rhythm Etudes" in a swing style using syncopated rhythms and scat syllables that reflect a variety of articulations. Students will write out their composition(s) and perform it for and with their peers.
5. Sing the Blues Scale ascending and descending. Identify the scale tones: 1, b3, 4, b5, 5, b7, 8. Add a pick-up note (b7) prior to ascending and descending the scale.
6. Practice accenting different beats as the students sing the Blues scale ascending and descending on quarter notes (i.e. accent beats 2 and 4, then 1 and 3).
7. Sing the Blues scale ascending and descending in a swing style using an underlying triplet feel on "doo ya" (or another syllable combination). Practice shifting the accents from the "and" of beats 1 and 3 to the "and" of beats 2 and 4.
8. Create 1 bar call-and-response ideas using notes from the Blues Scale in a swing style.
9. Students will practice creating their own 1 bar call-and-response ideas using notes from the Blues scale in a swing style. Their peers will perform the "response."
10. Students will create a 12 bar solo based on the Blues Scale in a swing style. Their goal is to end their solo with a repeated melodic/rhythmic motif that they will "pass" to the next soloist. The next student will then begin their solo with the motif that was "passed on" from the previous student. This exercise encourages listening and promotes self-confidence as the students will literally be given their opening solo ideas. Remind students that less is more, and that rests are as important as notes. In addition, students should be encouraged to use repetition and embellishment in their improvisation.
11. Students can begin to experiment with starting their solos on a scale tone other than the tonic note, as well as starting on a beat other than "1" (including off-beats).
12. Encourage students to listen to great jazz vocalists and instrumentalists in order to develop a "tool belt" of melodic, rhythmic, stylistic, and scat syllable ideas.

Assessment

Assessments will take the form of listening, analyzing and providing feedback and suggestions for improvement (in both written and vocal exercises).

References/Resources

1. 1. Jamey Aebersold Jazz Play/Sing-A-Long Series
2. 2. Students should be encouraged to listen to great jazz singers, instrumentalists, vocal jazz groups, and jazz ensembles including the following:
 - Louis Armstrong
 - Ella Fitzgerald
 - Jon Hendricks
 - Sarah Vaughan
 - Carmen McRae
 - Mel Torme

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- Annie Ross
- Eddie Jefferson
- Billie Holiday
- Chet Baker
- Al Jarreau
- Dave Lambert
- Diana Krall
- Duke Ellington
- Count Basie
- Glen Miller
- Tommy Dorsey
- Tower of Power
- Lambert, Hendricks and Ross
- Manhattan Transfer
- New York Voices
- The Real Group
- Rare Silk
- The Ritz