Hangin’ with the Giants

School Show Study Guide from the Artist

Luther Burbank Center for the Arts
Thursday, February 13, 2020
Hangin’ with the Giants
Study Guide
JazzReach’s Mission and History

Established in 1994, JazzReach is a nationally recognized New York City-based 501(c) (3) not-for-profit organization dedicated to the promotion, performance, creation and teaching of jazz music. Through the presentation of innovative, widely acclaimed live multi-media educational programs for young audiences, captivating main-stage concerts for general audiences and informative clinics and master-classes for student musicians and ensembles, JazzReach is steadfastly dedicated to fostering a greater appreciation, awareness and understanding of this rich, vital, ever-evolving American art form.

Since premiering our debut educational program in 1997, JazzReach has successfully positioned itself as one of our nation’s leading arts organizations dedicated to jazz. Our dynamic, innovative programs have triumphantly served over 275,000 young people nationwide in partnership with many of America’s most prominent performing arts presenters and have received unanimous praise from students, teachers, parents, the media and arts professionals alike.

Metta Quintet

All of JazzReach's artistic programming is carried out exclusively by the organization's dynamic, widely lauded resident ensemble, Metta Quintet. A highly creative unit comprised of some of today's brightest emerging jazz artists, Metta Quintet is dedicated to blazing new artistic territory while maintaining a steadfast commitment to fostering new audiences and nurturing young talent.

Figure 1: Metta Quintet

Dear Readers:

Welcome to the Hangin’ with the Giants Study Guide, produced by JazzReach Performing Arts & Education Association, Inc. This guide is intended to assist teachers in preparing their students for the educational performance they will be attending and participating in.
Hangin’ with the Giants

Targeting young audiences in grades K-4, Hangin’ with the Giants is a fun, high-energy program designed to promote the inclusiveness and accessibility of jazz while highlighting the legacies and music of some of the art form’s central contributors.

Staged as a late night talk show, Hangin’ with the Giants features animated likenesses of jazz greats: Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Miles Davis, and Thelonious Monk as show guests and offers numerous opportunities for students to interact and participate.

Louis Armstrong

Louis Armstrong (August 4, 1901 – July 6, 1971), nicknamed Satchmo or Pops, was an American jazz trumpeter and singer born in New Orleans, Louisiana.

“My whole life has been happiness,” Louis Armstrong liked to say, and he managed to make everyone who heard him feel that no matter how bad things got, everything was bound to turn out all right. His warm, unaffected presence sometimes masked the fact that he was also the most influential innovator in the history of jazz.

He was born in the poorest neighborhood in New Orleans, and the story of his rise is as astonishing, as inexplicable – and as American – as Abraham Lincoln’s. While in Fletcher Henderson’s band in 1924 and 1925 he introduced the world to the super syncopated interpretation of the 4/4 rhythms that became the art of big band swing. The power and virtuosity, the musical logic and emotional intensity of his playing on his own “Hot Five” and “Hot Seven” recordings made between 1925 and 1929 persuaded a generation of musicians that jazz could be a soloist’s art. And for the forty-plus years that followed he was the universally recognized ambassador of America’s music, beloved throughout the world. Along the way he extended the range of his instrument, fused the sound of the blues with the American popular song, and revolutionized American singing, bringing to it the same irresistible drive he’d brought to instrumental jazz.

He was, as trumpet player and Armstrong contemporary, Max Kaminsky, wrote, “the heir of all that had gone before and the father of all that was to come.” Miles Davis agreed: “You can’t play anything on your horn that Louis hasn’t played,” he said. “I mean not even modern.”

Duke Ellington

Edward Kennedy "Duke" Ellington (April 29, 1899 – May 24, 1974) was an American composer, pianist, and big-band leader.

“If jazz means anything,” Edward Kennedy Ellington once said, “it is freedom of expression.” No one in the history of jazz expressed himself more freely – or with more variety or swing or sophistication. He was a masterful pianist but his real instrument
was the orchestra he led for half a century. More consistently than anyone else in jazz history, Ellington showed how great music could simultaneously be shaped by the composer and created on the spot by the players. Each of his almost 2,000 compositions—love songs and dance tunes, ballet and film scores, musical portraits and tone poems, orchestral suites and choral works and more—was crafted to bring out the best in one or another of the extraordinary individuals who traveled the road with him. Ellington hated what he called “categories,” and refused to conform to anyone else’s notion of what he should be doing. As a result he managed to encompass in his music not only what he once called “Negro feeling put to rhythm and tune” but the rhythm and feeling of his whole country and much of the wider world, as well.

Charlie Parker
Charles "Charlie" Parker, Jr. (August 29, 1920 – March 12, 1955), also known as "Yardbird" and "Bird", was an American jazz saxophonist and composer.

“The first time I heard Bird play,” John Coltrane remembered, “it hit me right between the eyes.” Coltrane was not alone. Charlie Parker was the most influential improviser in jazz after Louis Armstrong; every musician who has attempted to play jazz since Parker’s death has had to deal with the impact of his furious inventive genius.

Steepled in the blues that were everywhere in his hometown of Kansas City, Missouri, and inspired by heroes like Lester Young, Parker was first heard in big bands led by Jay McShann and Earl Hines. In 1945, he and Dizzy Gillespie formed the quintet that ushered in the bebop era. Gillespie and Thelonious Monk and others had been experimenting with new ways of working with melody and harmony. Parker had been doing that, too, but he also brought with him a new way of phrasing. “He had just what we needed,” Gillespie remembered. “He had the line and he had the rhythm. We heard him and knew the music had to go his way.”

It did go his way. He was able to play only nine more years of it himself before his private demons killed him at 34. But the legacy of astonishing improvisation he left behind altered the melodies, harmonies, and rhythms—the whole language—of jazz.

Dizzy Gillespie
John Birks "Dizzy" Gillespie (October 21, 1917 – January 6, 1993) was an American jazz trumpeter, singer, bandleader, and composer.

“You only have so many notes,” John Birks Gillespie once explained, “and what makes a style is how you get from one note to the other.” Gillespie was in full command of every note...
on the trumpet – with a special fondness for the high, hard ones – but it was the way he strung them together that made him one of the greatest artists in jazz history. The youngest of nine children, Gillespie learned the value of speed, agility, and humor at the family dinner table and each found its way into his playing. Those elements, combined with his profound understanding of harmony were central to the development of the virtuosic style called bebop, and he was always willing to share all that he knew with younger musicians eager to learn how to play along.

Gillespie was also a zestful showman seasoned in the swing era who believed even the most challenging jazz should be “rhythmic enough to make you want to move.” To make his audiences want to do just that he led a series of brilliant big bands and, working with the conga master Chano Pozo, showed how jazz could be blended with Afro-Cuban rhythms. No one did more than he to demonstrate the power of jazz to cross all international boundaries; the role of music and musicians, he said, was to “help set things right.”

Miles Davis
Miles Dewey Davis III (May 26, 1926 – September 28, 1991) was an American jazz musician, trumpeter, bandleader, and composer.

“The difference between me and other musicians,” Miles Davis once said, “is that I’ve got charisma.” He became a cultural icon, nearly as well known for his elegant clothes, plain-spoken opinions and rejection of every remnant of minstrelsy as for his music. But it was the music that mattered in the end, and he is best remembered both for the unmistakable sound of his muted trumpet – spare and sometimes plaintive but always swinging – and for the skill with which he found and brought together great musicians and made them sound still greater. “That was my gift,” he said, “…the ability to put certain guys together [and] create a chemistry...letting them play what they knew, and above it ... That’s where great art and music happens.” With Davis’s involvement, great music happened again and again. Among the highlights of his long career: the 1949 “Birth of the Cool” sessions; the classic quintet that introduced John Coltrane to the world in 1955; the orchestral collaborations with Gil Evans; the 1959 modal experiments captured on the record “Kind of Blue;” and the 1964-66 quintet that struck a rare balance between intricate interplay and individual improvisational freedom. “Even we didn’t know where it was all going to,” he once said of his music. “But we knew it was going somewhere and that it was probably going to be hip.”

Thelonious Monk
Thelonious Sphere Monk (October 10, 1917 – February 17, 1982) was an American jazz pianist and composer.

“A genius is one who is most like himself,” said Thelonious Monk. By this standard, Monk’s brilliance was unmatched. Fingers splayed, elbows poised to collide with the keyboard, he neither played nor sounded like anyone else and the public recognized his
eccentricities – his ever-changing headgear, dizzying mid-performance dances and long, baffling silences – long before it accepted his music.

Raised in Manhattan and inspired by the New York masters of stride piano, Monk became the house pianist at Minton’s Playhouse where the young creators of bebop played together after-hours in 1940. From the first, the greatest musicians loved compositions like “‘Round Midnight” and “Epistrophy” with their unusual chords and voicings and sudden starts and stops, but it was not until 1957 and the release of his record, “Brilliant Corners,” that the jazz world fully came to see that he was, as John Coltrane said, “a musical architect of the highest order,” and one of the most important composers in the history of the music.

Figure 13: Thelonious Monk

Figure 12: Monk playing the piano

Audience Participation

As you attend the Hangin’ with the Giants! performance, remember that you are an important part of the production. One of the most exciting aspects of attending a live concert is the interactive relationship between the audience and the musicians. It is great to applaud at the end of a piece as well as at the end of the concert. You can even stand up and shout “Bravo!” when the musicians are finished with their performance and taking their bows!
Chops and Axes — A Jazz Talk Show

Grades: K-4
Subject areas: Music, History, Language Arts, and Theatre
Estimated time of completion: 6 - 50 minute sessions

Summary:
Students will explore the lives of various jazz musicians. They will become familiar with the social and historical events that were present during the lives of these individuals. They will listen to the music of the artists and become knowledgeable about their styles. This activity will culminate in the production of a news/talk show created and performed by the students highlighting the lives of these musical figures.

Objectives:
- Students will listen to, analyze, and describe music.
- Students will gain an understanding of music in relation to history and culture.
- Students will gain experience in theatre arts skills.
- Students will gain experience in the general skills and strategies of writing.
- Students will gain experience in the general skills and strategies of reading.
- Students will use the Internet to do research.

Materials:
- Computer(s) with Internet access will be used for online activity and research
- Available library resources
- Available jazz recordings
- Available video equipment
- Writing materials

Procedure:
1. Access the Jazz Greats section of the Jazz Web site. As a class, read some of the biographical material on the musicians found there and listen to the sound bites. Use the questions below to spark discussion about the information they have just been exploring.
   - What did these musicians share in common?
   - What were the events and/or social influences that shaped their music?
   - Ask the students if any of them share anything in common with these musicians (i.e. play the same instrument, live or have lived in the same region/city as the musician, etc.)

2. Read some of the student submissions in Future Jazz Greats. Share any thoughts the students have on these questions.
   - Are there any experiences in this section that they can personally relate to? What? Why?
   - What comparisons can you make with the musical experiences read in the student submissions in Now and the biographies in Then?

3. Explain to the class that they are going to be creating a talk show. The focus of this show is jazz and they will be interviewing famous historical and contemporary jazz personalities. Students will choose several jazz musicians to research. These will be some of the guests on the show. After the personalities are selected, divide students into groups to begin researching them. (The number of personalities and students assigned to each
will depend on class size and available computer access and resources).

4. Research can be done online, at home, the library, etc. All students will contribute to the scripting of the questions used by the hosts. This will be based upon their research. Students should carefully consider the different perspectives they were exposed to in jazz Greats and create questions that will reveal biographical, historical and social/cultural events that are prevalent in the time of the musicians life and are/were influences on their music when interviewing their musical guests. Students should have listened to (and may incorporate into the show) sound bites/recordings of the famous musician’s music.

5. When research is completed, students will select individuals to play the parts of the musicians they have studied. A host and co-host will also be selected. Students will perform this show in an available venue (i.e. for another music class, parent, etc.)

6. Written research will be handed into the teacher for evaluation. This can take the form deemed appropriate by the teacher (notes collected during research siting sources, reports including resources, etc.)

Assessment:

- Students should have completed all assignments and actively participated in all discussions.
- Teacher assessment of student’s knowledge on various musical figures through observation and anecdotal notes of performance.
- Student evaluation of project:
- Was enough information shared about the musician during the interview?
- If not, what else should have been included?
- Were audio musical examples used?
- What were the strong points in the presentation? Weak points?
- Suggest on area that could be improved and how you would do it?
- What was the most outstanding/interesting thing you learned during this process?

Relevant National Standards from the Mid Continent Regional Educational Library (McRel):

Music
- Listening to, analyzing, and describing music.
- Understanding music in relation to history and culture.

History
- Understands the folklore and other cultural contributions from various regions of the United States and how they helped to form a national heritage.

Language Arts
- Demonstrates competence in the general skills and strategies of writing.
- Demonstrates competence in the general skills and strategies of reading.
- Gathers and uses information for research purposes.

Technology
- Knows the characteristics and uses of computer hardware and software including the Internet.

Theatre
- Demonstrates competence in writing scripts.
- Uses acting skills.
- Designs and produces informal and formal productions.