First Steps In Jazz Improvisation

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by Mr. Brent Campbell - Vincent Massey High School, Brandon, MB, Mr. Greg Gatien - Brandon educators and the resources they have introduced to me. This presentation is directly influenced University, MB, Dr. John Kratus - Michigan State University, MI, and Mr. Bill Kristjanson -The ideas in this presentation are a culmination of my having learned from exemplary music Vincent Massey Collegiate, Winnipeg, MB.

A Safe Environment for Learning to Improvise

- Make improvisation part of daily music making.
- Communicate that making "mistakes" is an essential part of the learning process.
- improvisation (i.e., partners, solo, group, private practice). Establish an environment where students are offered multiple formats for participation in
- Model creative risk taking

Strengthening the Connection between the Ear and the Instrument

- Sing
- student created, and can also stem from repertoire and jazz recordings. Call and echo activities can build "vocabulary" in the jazz idiom. These can be teacher or
- pitches, dynamics, range, rhythms, use of space, etc.). Invite students to embellish familiar melodies using a variety of musical elements (i.e.,

For example #1: Vamp for Improvisation

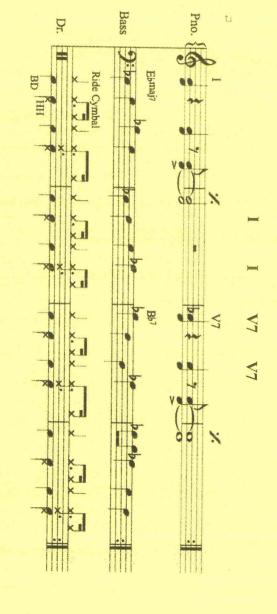
the room", or as sections, individuals, and pairs. Vary this activity using a variety of tonal centers. musical context for call and echo or call and response activities, as well as improvising "around larger collections of pitches, and styles. Invite the bass player to improvise an ostinato on the starting pitch, then invite the pianist or guitarist to "comp" some of the pitches on a rhythm of their choice. This sequence establishes a then find the pitch on their instruments. Repeat this process to teach a collection of pitches by ear. Invite the drummer to establish a style and tempo. Sing a starting pitch and have students sing,

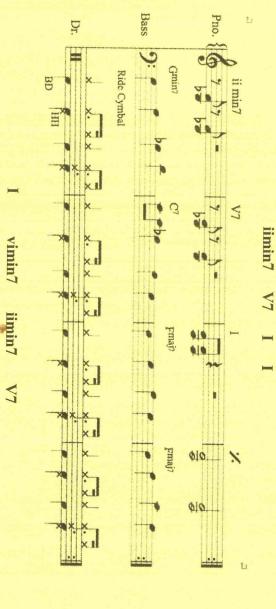
designer of the "Ears Before Books" method). * This example is based on an activity called "Space Jam" developed by Fred Sturm (the

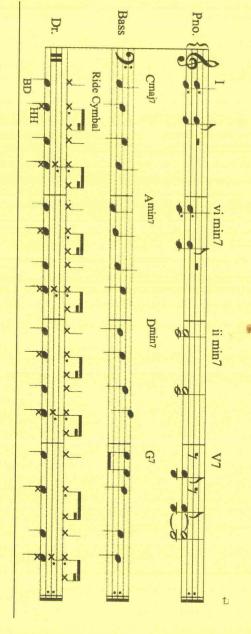
Sample Rhythm Section for Vamp



Sample Vamps Using Common Jazz Chord Progressions







Listening Up: Using Recordings to Enhance Student Learning in Jazz

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Getting Started: Cultivate an environment in which students feel validated and safe to share their

Sample listening activities can be accessed using the following link: https://goo.gl/GhTr2C

Begin with broad horizons:

possesses? What other artists or compositions does this recording remind you of? What do you notice about this recording? What are some musical strengths that this artist/ensemble

Simple activities to focus listening:

each chorus; Hum the root of the chord; Speak quarter notes on "doo"; Speak the rhythm of the Show me how you hear the beat by tapping your heel; Show me beat one of each bar by clapping; Raise choruses was the "comping" instrument; Clap the clave pattern; Count how many bars are in the form; How many your hand when you hear the harmonic "home base" change (modal examples); Clap at the beginning of

Questions to emphasize specific concepts:

the performers build intensity during the solo? artist use contrast in this solo? In what ways are the first and second phrases of the solo related? How do Improvisation: How does the improvisation relate to the melody of the tune? In what ways does the

does the rhythm section acknowledge the "top" of the form? (i.e., Freddie Freeloader)? In what ways does the "B" section contrast the "A" section? How (if at all) Form: Which two bars in the form are different from those found in a standard 12-bar blues progression

differently during the second solo? What idea might the artist(s) be communicating to the listeners in Interaction: What takes place in the spaces between the phrases? What does the rhythm section do this example?

Questions to extend responses:

artist made that choice? What impact did that technique have on the performance? Have you ever tried this technique in the recording? Who heard something different from this idea? Why do you think the a similar technique in your own performing? Can you tell me more about this? Who can add something to this idea? Who can identify an example of

Approaching the "Swing" Style

"Swing in its broadest sense involves the simultaneous interaction of rhythmic components of articulation, duration, note placement, contour, dynamics, and vibrato" (p. 12, Kernfeld).

"Swing is a combination of two things: rhythmic interpretation and rhythmic unity" (p. 45, Coker)

style. For Example: Count Basie Band performing Jumpin' at the Woodside and Front Burner; Cannonball Adderley Listen to swing examples in a variety of tempos and orchestrations so that students understand the range of the Quintet performing The Sleeper and Limehouse Blues

ideas along with recordings. Encourage students to emulate the stylistic elements demonstrated by their recorded from piano/guitar. Have students "speak" quarters and eighths along with recordings. Have students play rhythmic Draw students' attention to the drummer, especially the ride cymbal, the "walking" bass, and the "comping" figures