

Your name

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Course

Date

What Can Jazz Teach Us?

Jazz music originated in the late 19th century and beginning of the beginning of 20th century. It remains one of the most popular and influential genres in music. The best word to describe jazz is “improvisation.” Jazz is usually performed by bands. Each musician may improvise but must pay attention to what the other members of a band are doing by adhering to the general framework and structure of the tune.

One can derive great pleasure from playing jazz. In addition, one can learn from it, as well. Hanley and Sandoval say that jazz pushes boundaries. It is an art form grounded in interpretation and improvisation – freedom of expression and personal choice. Performers, composers, and arrangers of jazz music strive to offer an original voice and advance artistic expression through the use of music vocabulary, instrumentation, and form. They dream of and make sounds unheard before and identify ways to breathe new life into standard repertoire.

For the student, interpretation is often easier than improvisation. Taking a jazz standard and planning ways to alter the melody or rhythm, stretch phrases, or insert space and ornamentation is different than spontaneously creating original music during a performance. Interpretation requires an awareness of musical expression and the ability to make effective choices. Improvisation, on the other hand, can be scary and intimidating for a student. At first, the student must perform solos in front of other musicians and general audiences. This risk-taking performance instills confidence when the student is successful but can be devastating if not successful. As such, it is essential that the student understand the improvisational process and receive clear guidance and feedback from her instructor on her performance. Once familiar with the music and confident, the student is ready to interpret music, share original ideas, and use artistic and intellectual imagination to play jazz.

For the teacher, imagination is an essential component of the instruction. The instructor needs to creatively engage students with effective techniques and new ways of thinking about and making music during each lesson. The instructor also needs to listen to the student and find ways to help the student express his or herself through an instrument or with voice – working together to stretch and grow over time. Teaching improvisation requires a step-by-step approach that allows the student to build on prior knowledge and abilities while simultaneously developing skill and confidence. For the performer, interpretation and improvisation allow for some of the best jazz music-making experiences as the student shares original ideas and skill with audiences. The ability to develop a solo that has a beginning, middle, and end includes hooks, riffs, and/or quotes. In addition, it demonstrates technical and artistic proficiency that is exhilarating for musicians. Moreover, these solos inspire other musicians and listeners, and advance the art form (Hanley & Sandoval).

Surprisingly, jazz can also teach one about job success:

1. Determine what the story is and consistently ignite others with its emotional power. The finest jazz musicians tell a story with their music — there's a well-defined beginning and end with an arc of riveting highlights in between. The artists come back to the central theme again and again even as they explore a variety of harmonic pathways along the way that imprint their work with a uniquely personal stamp.
2. Every company and every worker has a story to tell that defines what they are about and what they hope to achieve. To support the business, individuals work to develop their individual brands. It behooves one to determine what those stories are and how to best convey those story lines through the full range of activities. Then, no matter how chaotic or complicated things become, the essential mission remains in focus and success becomes more likely.
3. Individuals should improvise as they go, but they should be careful not to lose sight of the ultimate goal. One of the key characteristics of jazz is improvisation. Artists devise their

own melodies, creating signature patterns and phrasing that build and elaborate on a central theme and take the listener on an intriguing journey. Yet, they always know precisely where they will end up, and their inspirational detours lead their listeners to that point.

4. Share the limelight and let others shine. When performing a composition, jazz musicians take turns playing solos on stage. This allows the audience to focus on the full measure of their virtuosity and the special sounds they create with their instruments. In addition, the band leader usually introduces the individual artists at various points during the performance.
5. Take breaks in the midst of the action. A jazz band will often increase band members or downsize as a performance progresses, morphing, for example, into a trio or duo in accordance with the needs of the piece. When a musician does not need to play, he frequently steps off stage, allowing the audience to give its undivided attention to the players who remain. This approach gives the performers a chance to rest and recharge for the next set of musical numbers.
6. Give fully to the task at hand and have the fun. Few artists are more engaged in their work than jazz musicians. They seem to go into a trance as they perform, but what is also evident among these artists is the sense of joy they derive from playing (Sapolin).

Works Cited

Hanley, Darla S. & Iñaki Sandoval. Beyond the Music: What Jazz Teaches Us. 2014. Web.

Sapolin, Donna. 5 Things Jazz Can Teach Us About Job Success. 2014. Web.