Unit 6:Evaluating Improvised Solos in Jazz

Content Area: **Music**
Course(s):
Time Period: **Marking Period 1**
Length: **Ongoing**
Status: **Published**

Brief Summary of Unit

This unit focuses on developing students' critical listening and analytical skills through the study and evaluation of improvised solos in jazz.

Revised August 2025

Standards

ELD standards:https://docs.google.com/document/d/1wdmsiGOdCHlrjU-WPvAtENnEgi0EStZXo0uiFYv1Nu4/edit

1.3C.12acc.Cr1a	Compose and improvise ideas for arrangements, sections and short compositions for specific purposes that reflect characteristic(s) of music from a variety of historical periods or cultures studied in rehearsal.
1.3C.12acc.Cr2a	Select and develop arrangements, sections, and short compositions for specific purposes that demonstrate understanding of characteristic(s) of music from a variety of cultures studied in rehearsal.
1.3C.12acc.Cr3a	Evaluate and refine draft arrangements, sections, short compositions, and improvisations based on personally developed criteria, including the extent to which they address identified purposes.
1.3C.12acc.Cr3b	Share personally developed arrangements, sections and short compositions (individually or as an ensemble) that address identified purposes.
1.3C.12acc.Pr4a	Develop and apply criteria to select a varied repertoire to study and perform based on an understanding of theoretical and structural characteristics and expressive challenges in the music, the technical skill of the individual or ensemble, and the purpose and context of the performance.
1.3C.12acc.Pr4b	Document and demonstrate, using music reading skills (where appropriate), how compositional devices employed, and theoretical and structural aspects of musical works, may impact and inform prepared and improvised performances.
1.3C.12acc.Pr4c	Demonstrate how understanding the style, genre and context of a varied repertoire of music influences prepared and improvised performances as well as performers' technical skills to connect with the audience.
1.3C.12acc.Pr5a	Develop and apply appropriate rehearsal strategies to address individual and ensemble challenges in a varied repertoire of music and evaluate their success.
1.3C.12acc.Pr6a	Demonstrate mastery of the technical demands and an understanding of expressive qualities of the music in prepared and improvised performances of a varied repertoire

	representing diverse cultures, styles, genres, and historical periods.
1.3C.12acc.Pr6b	Demonstrate an understanding of intent as a means for connecting with an audience through prepared and improvised performances.
1.3C.12acc.Re7a	Apply criteria to select music for a variety of purposes, justifying choices citing knowledge of the music and the specified purpose and context.
1.3C.12acc.Re7b	Explain how the analysis of structures and contexts inform the response to music.
1.3C.12acc.Re8a	Support interpretations of the expressive intent and meaning of musical works citing as evidence the treatment of the elements of music, contexts, the setting of the text (when appropriate), and varied researched sources.
1.3C.12acc.Re9a	Evaluate works and performances based on research as well as personally and collaboratively developed criteria, including analysis and interpretation of the structure and context.
1.3B.12acc.Cn10a	Demonstrate how interests, knowledge and skills relate to personal choices and intent when creating, performing and responding to music.
1.3B.12acc.Cn11a	Demonstrate how interests, knowledge and skills relate to personal choices and intent when creating, performing and responding to music.

Transfer

Essential Questions

- Can you hear specific techniques being used during an improvised solo?
- How are artistic ideas conveyed in music?
- How do musicians develop a “sound,” and how can that sound be used to identify an artist?
- What do you hear when listening to an improvised solo?
- What musical characteristics are unique to each instrument in improvised solos?

Essential Understandings

- artistic expression can be predetermined or improvised.
- improvised solos can be analyzed using musical elements common to all music (melody, rhythm, range, phrasing, form, etc.).
- music theory is an essential part of improvised solos.
- musicians often quote or paraphrase from their mentors and musical influences or historical recordings.
- there are unique expressive elements that are characteristic of each wind and percussive instrument.

Students Will Know

- common improvisation devices that are unique to wind and percussion instruments (ex. Altissimo, mutes, glissando, etc.).
- how an understanding of music theory is used in creating improvised solos.
- how artists transfer inspiration in improvised solos.
- how to identify musical thoughts and phrases in improvised solos.
- the importance of historical improvisation in modern day performance.
- the important solo artists in the evolution of jazz.
- the listening responsibilities of the soloist and rhythm section during improvised solos.
- the theoretical and artistic elements that are used to evaluate original solos.

Students Will Be Skilled At

- Articulating ideas heard within artists solos
- Dictation of rhythm and/or pitch of given examples
- Identifying performers of jazz upon hearing them
- Identifying styles of jazz upon hearing them

Evidence/Performance Tasks

- demonstrate understanding through writing and performance of the identified music theory needed to evaluate improvised solos including, but not limited to, chords, modes, scales, form, and phrasing
- evaluate improvised solos from within the ensemble with class developed rubric.
- evaluate improvised solos through the application of standard criteria developed by the class
- identify standard recordings of improvised solos in formal assessment.
- listen to and describe improvised solos in each of the major classifications of jazz music (ragtime, Dixieland, swing, bebop, cool jazz, hard bop, avant-garde, fusion, contemporary).
- participate in group discussions of the essential questions.
- transcribe and analyze a given solo.
- transcribe and perform improvised solos.

Learning Plan

- Analyze improvised solos as a group—written; aural.
- Develop rubric with class to evaluate student improvised solos.
- Discuss and experience the essential questions and connect to learning throughout the unit.
- Expose students to chord scales—learn formulae, apply to various key signatures, use in rehearsal warm up, use in improvised solos.
- Introduce concepts of repetition, chromatics, phrasing, varying range, etc.
- Introduce concepts of trading four-bar phrases, stop time, communication between soloist and rhythm section.

- Learn the required theory needed to evaluate improvised solos.
- Listening quiz – predetermined solo artists and tracks.
- Model and play appropriate listening examples of artistic expression in improvised solos.
- Perform improvised warm-ups and have students evaluate their peers and suggest a course of improvement.
- Play and evaluate appropriate recording examples to demonstrate music theory and chord structure in improvised solos.
- Play appropriate recording examples to demonstrate chord scales in improvised solos.
- Play appropriate recording examples to demonstrate four-bar phrases, stop time, communication between the soloist and rhythm section.
- Play appropriate recording examples to reinforce concepts of repetition, phrasing, varying range, etc.
- Provide the opportunity for each student to solo during open and definitive solo sections in musical literature.
- Quiz—identifying solo artists and influences.
- Quiz—individual analysis of an improvised solo.
- Require the students to transcribe and analyze a specific solo.

Materials

- program capable of slowing music down for transcription
- smartboard
- speakers for playback of examples

Suggested Strategies for Modifications

Jazz Band QSAC Accommodations and Modifications

- Choose solos of various rhythmic complexity depending on the level of the student.
- Require varying levels of depth in the analysis of the improvised solos.
- Vary the difficulty of the solos chosen for each student to analyze.
- Vary the length of solos used for analysis by the students of various levels.
- When working in a group, aim different levels of questioning at the different levels of students.