

Analyzing Some Classic American Music for Piano by Joplin, Still, and Gershwin

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INTRODUCTION

Music is the reflection of social implications, spiritual, economic, and the artful blend and depiction of diverse cultures. With this in mind, this curriculum unit will survey the compositional style and the unique techniques of George Gershwin as well as compare his compositions with other composers, such as Scott Joplin and William Grant Still. The areas of concentration will be on the treatment of the musical elements in the development and creation of the compositions entitled *Rhapsody in Blue*, *Three Piano Preludes*, *The Entertainer*, *Maple Leaf Rag*, *Five Preludes for Piano*, and *Five Animals Sketches (Music for Early Childhood)*. The title of the unit will be, “Analyzing Some Classic American Music for Piano by Joplin, Still, and Gershwin.”

The rationale for developing this curriculum unit is to cultivate an awareness of the composers and compositions of America as well as to make the study of history more relevant to the students in regard to American music. Moreover, students do not separate their learning into segregated compartments or subject areas. Therefore, it is important to innovatively correlate the arts with academic subjects as much as possible in order to build on the wholeness of the students’ perspective and their connections to the culture in which they live. This unit of study is important to the students for many reasons. First, the transition from the nineteenth century Romanticism to the twentieth century “modernism” reflects unrest and upheaval in musical thought. The correlations of this viewpoint parallels the transition made in popular music to the “Hip-Hop” or “Rap” music scene of today’s teenagers and younger generations. Second, the music of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries reflects more diversity, cultural idioms, and instruments as well as a wider range of expressions through the usage of harmonic and polyrhythmic structure. Third, the changes and the combinations in the fields of science, technology, music industry, media, motion pictures, and business have also impacted performers, composers, and the audience in regards to both discriminating and undiscriminating taste. Finally, this unit is important to my students because it will enable them to develop aesthetically and philosophically with regards to listening to different compositional styles and forms of music, and it will help to cultivate their appreciation for more than popular music.

The discourse of study within this unit will impact the students in the following ways: first, it will enable them to develop an understanding of the structural organizations of musical compositions. The structural analysis will be investigated through the examination of musical form. In addition, the students will correlate the differences between the sonata of the Classical period with the forms of twentieth century classicism and symphonic jazz. Second, the students will analyze melodic and thematic treatment of

compositional ornamentations and other devices utilized to implement idiomatic cultural influences. The compositional ornamentations include altered pitches, slurs, ties, modes, and the twelve-tone scale. Third, the students will analyze the rhythmic structures in order to classify them as symmetrical and asymmetrical, and to compare them with complexities cultivated by other cultures (such as the African). Fourth, the students will analyze harmony and texture including the use of bitonality and polytonality, clusters, dissonances, and the changes of keys or modulations. Finally, the students will analyze the performance media and tonal color with regards to both solo piano and piano with string ensembles or orchestra.

This unit of study will enhance the students' learning through an interdisciplinary correlation of mathematics, music, and history. Through the study of part-writing and the analysis of secondary dominants, the students will learn to apply the numeric figures to represent progressions, alterations, and inversions. In addition, the students will correlate the impact of the sociocultural influences of American history to the new compositional styles and techniques.

The teaching strategies or methodologies incorporated to develop my curriculum unit will reflect the following principles for implementing the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills from the state's curriculum guidelines in order to evoke critical thinking: the meditative, generative, directive, and collaborative strategies. First, the meditative strategy will be implemented by encouraging the students to utilize research skills for investigating the history of composers from previous periods of music as well as in the comparison of music in the same eras. In other words, this strategy will be used in the analysis of the compositional forms, styles, and structural devices of differing composers and periods of music. Second, the generative strategy will be implemented by encouraging the students to develop insights into the innovative processes of each composer studied. In addition, students will analyze transpositions, characteristics of cultural idioms, modes, tonalities, and other compositional techniques. Third, directive strategy will be implemented by me, the instructor. I will utilize this strategy in introducing the unit and by the explanation of background information such as socio-cultural influences, vocabulary lists, written exercises, and explanations of procedures for assignments and projects. Fourth, the collaborative strategy will be implemented by assigning group projects and discussion groups.

Through the implementation of the above strategies in the development of this unit, the students will gain personal enhancements through the appreciation of artistic interpretations. Moreover, the students will acquire new approaches for synthesizing and evaluating knowledge relating to the relevancy of classical music to the transition of popular music of today.

The types of assignments designed by the instructor will include methodologies that will implement a cognitive curriculum. These assignments will include construction of comparison charts between Gershwin and other composers, musical scores, written

research papers, listening exercises of recordings, videos on the history of jazz, and transparencies of musical scores (with emphasis on examples of compositional techniques).

Upon the completion of this unit, the students will have been enlightened through the assignments in addition to being enriched by learning the connections between classical, jazz, and popular music.

UNIT BACKGROUND

Because music is included as an activity of every man's culture, only the person who is knowledgeable about many styles can appreciate large varieties of different forms. More importantly, as a piano instructor, in order to cultivate development and proficiencies in artistic communication, interpretation, and expression, the student performers must be exposed to serious music.

Through the exposure to serious music, the student becomes familiar with the composer's treatment of the musical elements as well as his or her unique style. In addition, since music is the reflection of the composer's inner thoughts through his creativity, the musical performance becomes a partnership between the composer and the performer. In other words, the performer must have an understanding of musical period, form, harmonic analysis, and expressional terms or markings (which are important for the interpretation of a piece). Furthermore, teaching makes learning more meaningful or relevant to the student when it implements strategies that are correlated with other areas of interest. For these reasons, the student needs to become aware of the influences of both culture and history in music. In addition, some discussion of how popular musical structure is closely related to serious music will help the student become more familiar with the history of how these forms evolved and is discussed in the first lesson plan.

American composers such as Gershwin, Joplin, and Still are known throughout the world. This international recognition has classified the compositions by these composers as extraordinary. The contributions made by George Gershwin include merging classical music with jazz. He gained recognition and fame after he composed a jazz piece for Paul Whiteman's band. The composition mentioned above is entitled *Rhapsody in Blue*. Scott Joplin contributed to compositional techniques implemented in the Ragtime style of jazz. One of his popular compositions is entitled *The Maple Leaf Rag*. Another significant composer of American music is William Grant Still. He gained recognition for his *Afro-American Symphony*. His contributions are important to music because he was known as the Dean of America's Black Composers.

The method for developing this unit is to provide the students with a "hands-on" experience of examining varying styles of compositions as well as an analysis of a musical work. In addition, these objectives are included in the Project CLEAR music history objective number 2b, Texas Education Agency (TEA) codes 117.60c.1,

117.61c1, 117.62c.1, 117.63c.1, Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) codes, and Stanford 10 Test objective codes A1-A2, and T3 of Social Studies.

This unit is designed to be a month-long investigative study of the structural organization and compositional techniques of the following piano works: Scott Joplin's *Entertainer* and *Maple Leaf*, William Grant Still's *Five Preludes for Piano* and *Five Animal Sketches (Music for Early Childhood)*, and George Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* and *Three Piano Preludes*. In addition, the discourse will include information on the culture, educational training, and influencing factors that resulted in these composers' unique styles. The unit will begin with an examination of the historical events during the era these composers lived in. Moreover, it will include information on the early life of Scott Joplin; proceed on to William Grant Still, and then George Gershwin. Furthermore, it will include information illustrating the functions of cultural idioms within the thematic, rhythmic, and harmonic development and structure of each selected composition.

OVERVIEW OF THREE COMPOSERS

“American classical music during the period between 1900 and 1920 evolved in a kind of kaleidoscopic variety of directions” (Struble 66). During this time, American composers were less intrigued with the music of the European composers. As a result, the American composers began to seek ways to develop American classical compositions that concentrated on the themes of ethnic and folk music. Among the significant composers of this period are Scott Joplin, William Grant Still, and George Gershwin.

Cultural Influences

“In the transition from the nineteenth century Romanticism to the twentieth century Modernism was a period marked by violence and unrest” (Wold and Cykler 239). During this time, World War I had ended (a few years before, in 1918) and the Great Depression began, in 1929. These conditions are captured and depicted through the audible sounds of musical tones within the compositions that reflect the composers' individual techniques such as using non-traditional harmonic progressions, expressions, instrumentations, and metrical structures. In other words, the composers of this century, seeking individuality and self-expression, created varied styles of atonal and microtonal music (which will be discussed in lesson one background). Another socio-cultural influence that impacted music at this time was that the American composers became less interested in the European composers. As a result, American composers were inspired to be more creative and utilize applications of “jazz rhythms, unusual instruments, free dissonances, numerical structures-that was not sanctioned in European music” (Gann 27). The American composers were not influenced by the European composers and therefore, “determined their own musical destiny” (Gann 27). In other words, the American composers utilized sounds of the different ethnic cultures or folk cultures through scales

tones, rhythms, and instruments to produce new styles. This is especially true in the compositions created during the Harlem Renaissance era.

“The socio-cultural influences which may affect music are many and varied. Two great political revolutions, communism and fascism made deep impressions on musical compositions in the twentieth century” (Wold and Cykler 240). This revolution caused many composers and music teachers to be exiled to the United States. “Eventually, many of the universities and conservatories became dominated by German instructors and the Americans that had studied in Germany” (Grout and Palisca 763). Also, after World War I, large numbers of European workers migrated to America. These immigrants were from countries such as Germany, Austria, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia. These immigrants brought with them their musical heritage and traditions. As a result, these musical practices produced a variety of exotic expressions.

“The internationalism of all music cultures has resulted in the resurgence of interest of antique instruments of the Renaissance and Eastern cultures” (Grout and Palisca 245). This is exceptionally true in popular music, such as jazz. The music of this genre has many influences of cultural life. In other words, these songs depict cultural idioms through styles of songs, ornamentations of melody, rhythm, and expressions. During the early years of the twentieth century, the revolt of youth had developed into “music of protest” (Wold and Cykler 245). During the ragtime era, the revolt of the youth to listening and dancing to this style of music resulted in this music expanding and being performed within other cultures.

Harlem Renaissance

“Throughout the late nineteenth century, emancipated blacks began the process of migration from the Deep South to the urban centers of the North, in search of better opportunities” (Struble 67). In about 1910, Afro-Americans began moving north into the area called Harlem; within a few years, Harlem would become the “intellectual, artistic, and cultural capital of black Americans” (Southern 348).

The Harlem Renaissance movement began in 1921. It started with a group of artistic Afro-Americans intellectuals. The goals of these artists were to “promote, document, and rediscover folk materials of the Afro-America culture” (Floyd 1). In addition, this movement was an effort to assert cultural, social, and economic equality with white citizens. In order to achieve this goal, Charles P. Johnson and other leaders of the Harlem Renaissance “issued a call for artists to come to Harlem” (Floyd 2). Among the musicians to go to Harlem were Eubie Blake from Baltimore and Duke Ellington from Washington, D.C. Among the publishing firms was W.C. Handy. “In 1920, William Grant Still moved [in] on 127th Street. In 1923, Duke Ellington moved to New York with his band” (Floyd 3). During this time, Harlem was the central location of the movement. For the after hours, both Afro-American and white performers would go to Harlem to hear the performance of black music. This exchange had a significant impact on the

music of this time period. This exchange brought about influences that were illustrated in many shows of the musical theater and dances in the concert halls. In other words, white musicians and performers began to implement some aspects of the Afro-American musical elements into their compositions.

By the 1920s, Afro-American music had extended into other parts of the world as well as established international acceptance. During the 1900s to the 1930s, there were three groups of performers, composers, and musicians that were important to popular music. These musicians and performers were divided into three classes, “that included the Group of Four, the Jazzmen, and the Pianists” (Floyd 6). These musicians were responsible for the contributions of changing the music from the primitive forms to more complex structures.

Whenever black musicians departed from stereotypical performances, the white critics were offended and the white critics referred to these attempts as unwarranted for blacks to imitate white musicals. An example of this idea was the production entitled *Lady Be Good* which was written by black writers, but, in 1924 was given a white interpretation by George Gershwin which seemed to be more acceptable. (Floyd 12)

The influence of the music of these composers, musicians, and performers has survived to today. In other words, the musical styles created during the Harlem Renaissance movement have “substantially affected the music of popular music for decades to come” (Floyd 12).

The classical music of the Harlem Renaissance movement served as the catalyst for building the foundation for serious music performed by trained black performers. Among this group were Harry T. Burleigh, William Grant Still, and others. Their contributions combined the transition of folk music to art music forms. In other words, “Afro-American concert and recital music (during the 1920s) was one of the significant musical progresses stimulated by the newly formed National Association of Negro Musicians” (Floyd 14). Its goal was there to cultivate, discover, and promote talented Afro-Americans. One of the musical compositions that premiered during this era was James P. Johnson’s *Yamekraw* (for symphonic orchestra and piano). This performance, as well as others, demonstrated that Afro-Americans had both the skills and talent to both compose and perform serious music. In other words, the artistic endeavors during the Harlem Renaissance movement, in addition to the philosophical objectives on which they were developed, “represented a significant break with the Euro-American tradition. Black folk music and its derivatives were the catalyst” (Floyd, 18).

Music Culture Distinctions

During the early years of the Harlem Renaissance, there were two divisions between the performers. The two groups were classified as intellectuals and show people. The

intellectual group included the literary writers, classical musicians, and actors. The second group included the jazz musicians, popular musicians, and other performers. “While there was a firm class structure in Harlem, interactions between the two groups did take place” (Floyd 19). However, years later, these two groups of performers became one. It was at the Savoy and other places like it “where the ideals of both worlds met and interacted” (Floyd 20).

Racial Interactions

“The Ku Klux Klan was at the height of its popularity (with lynching of blacks). Racism was institutionalized even in the North” (Stearns v). After World War I, “European immigrants were being imported by the boatload to staff the industrial factories of the North” (Struble 67). As a result, “American Afro-Americans and the European immigrants in the late nineteenth century were herded into the ghetto neighborhoods in the cities, where they often lived under conditions of poverty and social repression” (Struble 67). Under these circumstances, “the American Jews decided that they were in a special relationship with the African Americans and some of the important African Americans’ political and cultural leaders worked to link the two groups. This activity was a crucial site in the music business” (Melnick 16).

“The ethnic groups of this newly developed melting pot had fused into their own urban neighborhoods which enable them to preserve their language, culture, music, and traditions from their homelands” (Struble 96). As a result, “starting in 1913, American music as a whole began to divide into the multiplicity of styles, genres, and factions that continue today and each with its own creative structures” (Struble 96). In other words, this was the foundation of the American musical fabric.

“The social interactions between both black and white musicians took place on all social levels” (Floyd 21). For instance, George Gershwin was a white musician who repeatedly attended the Harlem rent parties. As a result, “he later invited some of the Harlem musicians to his downtown soirees, including a party to celebrate his *Rhapsody in Blue*” (Floyd 22). As for white musicians, an invitation extended to George Gershwin for their parties served as a tool for “learning black music” indirectly (Floyd 22). In other words, these collaborations aided and “enhanced the spread of black musical traditions as well as enabled it to become a part of the American musical fabric” (Floyd 22).

MUSICAL GENRES OF PIECES IN THIS UNIT

“There is no form which is peculiar or unique to the twentieth century” (Grout 765). As a result, the composers returned to some of the styles and forms of the classical period. An example of this can be found in the compositions *Rhapsody in Blue* and *Three Piano Preludes* by George Gershwin and the *Five Piano Preludes* and *Five Animal Sketches* by William Grant Still.

Rhapsody in Blue was written in the concerto form for piano and orchestra. The concerto is a one-movement form (or classified as a large single-movement work). It is the “revival of the concerto grosso” (Wold and Cykler 265). The only difference between Gershwin’s concerto and the traditional concerto is that Gershwin’s was written in the jazzed context.

Three Piano Preludes were written as short piano pieces. These compositions were written in an ABA pattern. In other words, this piece is written in a form similar to the ternary form. In addition, the middle section of this composition is similar to one of the movements of *Rhapsody in Blue*.

Five Piano Preludes were written as short compositions. They are differentiated by their tempos. In addition, this collection was written as if each one is a different section of a larger work. Moreover, these pieces are built on a polychord structure. The musical form used in each piece is the ternary form.

Five Animal Sketches are very short character pieces. These pieces were composed to convey the attributes of animals. In addition, these pieces were a collection written specifically for early childhood. Moreover, each animal in the collection is differentiated by the tempo terms and metronome markings.

The Entertainer and *Maple Leaf Rag* were written in the ragtime style. Of these two songs, “*Maple Leaf Rag* became a jazz standard and the novelty ragtime song” (Yanow 3). This style of music was a popular form of American music during the late 1890s to the mid 1910s. In addition, the ragtime style was regarded as “a complicated workout for the virtuoso pianist” (Yanow 3). This style of music was characterized by its march-like tempo and syncopated melodies. In addition, this style of music was also associated with dances such as the cakewalk, “a dance marked by strutting and acrobatic movements” (Grout and Palisca 765). These pieces were written for piano and were not improvised. The ragtime compositions are written in the AABBACC or the AABBACDD song forms. Both *The Entertainer* and *Maple Leaf Rag* are classified as instrumental rags.

Scott Joplin

“As a child, Scott Joplin studied music with a local German music teacher” (Southern 322). In 1884, he left home to pursue a career playing professionally. He went to St. Louis, Missouri in 1885. In St. Louis, he gained “recognition for his piano rag skills” (Southern 322). In addition, he also developed his skills as a composer. He lived in St. Louis, Missouri from 1885 to 1893. “In 1894, Joplin appeared with a band at the Chicago’s World’s Fair and he formed the Texas Medley Quartet, with whom he performed in vaudeville” (Yanow 2). Later, he moved to Sedalia, Missouri, “where his compositions began to be published by John Stark” (Yanow 2).

Berlin mentions that, “It was with Ragtime that Scott Joplin became a composer of note” (45). In other words, he gained recognition “in ragtime history” because “he was a composer of the idiom’s most refined and sophisticated piano rags” (Berlin 45). Scott Joplin’s music career as well as some of his higher educational training began after his move to Sedalia, Missouri. At Sedalia, he performed with a group called the Queen City Cornet Band. Later, he left the group to form his own band, which consisted of a cornet, clarinet, E-flat tuba, baritone, drums, and piano. With this group he performed at engagements for both black and white crowds. In addition, he also played solo piano for events in town. Two establishments, the Maple Leaf Club and the Black 400 Club, were connected to the success and exposure of Scott Joplin and his music. Joplin’s style of music was known as ragtime. Ragtime style was described as the combination of dance music and song form. During the late 1890s to the 1910s, “ragtime was America’s first national style of music” (Berlin vii). As a result, the development of the new form of music evolved into a new genre of music utilizing the piano as the principle instrument.

This new style of instrumental music caused “the white majority to embrace both Scott Joplin’s *Maple Leaf Rag* and Irving Berlin’s *Everybody’s Doing It*” (Berlin vii). As a result, Scott Joplin gained widespread recognition as a composer, especially in 1899 after the publication of his first ragtime musical work. His music was unique as well as different. Many newspaper and magazine articles were written about him. His compositional techniques include lively syncopated melodies with definite rhythms in the bass. His contributions include a large repertoire of piano pieces and a folk opera.

William Grant Still

William Grant Still studied at “Wilberforce University in Ohio from 1911 to 1914” (Southern 431). At this university, he studied with Friedrich Lehmann and George Andrews. In addition, he also studied “privately with George Chadwick in 1922 and Edgard Varese from 1923 to 1925” (Southern 431). At Wilberforce he arranged music for various ensembles. In 1914, “he left college to play professionally with a dance orchestra” (Southern 431). In 1916, he was employed with W.C. Handy and “made his first arrangements for band” (Southern 431). Later, Still moved to New York and was again employed with W.C. Handy. In 1921, he was employed with the Harry Pace’s Phonograph Company. One of his first serious compositions was entitled *Darker America*, in 1925. In 1926, he composed another serious composition entitled *Levee Land* (a composition that merged jazz idioms with traditional European techniques). “For more than fifteen years, Still composed primarily black nationalistic music in a variety of forms”(Southern 432).

William Grant Still is considered to be a “patriarchal figure for Black composers” (Smith 39). He has been “credited with pioneering the way and establishing a place for the African American composer of twentieth-century art music” (Smith 40). William Grant Still in many ways was an extraordinary person because he achieved as a composer and arranger in spite of racial barriers. During his lifetime, “he participated in three

musical trends in art music within the first half of the twentieth century” (Smith 41). The three trends are modernism, nationalism, and cultural movement. The cultural movement was known as the Harlem Renaissance (also called the New Negro movement). This period spanned from 1919 to 1934. The Harlem Renaissance afforded African Americans opportunities and exposure in the arts. In addition, “Black vernacular music, such as jazz, blues, and musical theater, thrived” (Smith 41). At the time of the Harlem Renaissance, Still took part in many musical activities, such as jazz, popular music, art music, and musical theater as a performer and an arranger. Still came to New York after an offer made by W.C. Handy to work in the Pace & Handy Publishing Company and to play in the band. He left this band in 1920. In 1921, he performed with a black musical revue as well as orchestrated several songs. Later, he worked for the Pace Recording Company (the Black Swan label) and a Harlem Orchestra. After leaving the Pace Recording Company, Still began work professionally as an orchestrator and arranger. During this time, Still met many influential people. His compositional technique was written in the romantic idiom and with strong American influences in the rhythmic structure. In other words, his techniques include the use of black spirituals in a jazzed style. He gained widespread recognition through his *Afro-American Symphony*. His repertoire of compositions includes a large variety of works such as chamber, piano, orchestral, and choral.

George Gershwin

George Gershwin “displayed a curiosity about music by attempting to reproduce tunes by ear” (Struble 97). “In 1913, he was employed as a pianist at a summer resort” (Struble 98). He became a high school dropout in 1914. He studied music most of his life. He began composing music at age 15. In 1919, he composed his first successful composition which was entitled *La, La, Lucille* (Struble 103). Gershwin became famous on Broadway in 1920. The musical that contributed to his success was entitled *Scandals of 1920*, which resulted from collaboration with George White.

George Gershwin’s career as a composer and arranger began with his employment with Tin Pan Alley Publishers. He worked as a song plugger in this organization. Gershwin’s compositions include Broadway musicals, piano pieces, and a folk opera. Many of his compositions’ melodies are romantic in texture, combined with jazz harmonies and rhythms, as well as utilize the “Schillinger System of Music Composition” (Gilbert 6). In 1919, Gershwin composed his first successful popular song, entitled *Swanee*. In the 1920s, his popularity and fame grew with the Broadway musical entitled *Of Thee I Sing*. Moreover, this musical comedy was the first musical work to win a Pulitzer Prize. During the Harlem Renaissance movement, “Gershwin frequently attended rent parties, especially those at which the pianists performed” (Floyd 21). As a result, both middle- and upper-middle class whites were exposed to African American music. These interactions impacted jazz, musical theater, and art music. “It was in this and related ways that the continuity of Afro-American music spread to become part of the American musical traditions” (Floyd 22). With this connection, black-music scholars

have linked “Summertime” from Gershwin’s opera *Porgy and Bess* as an adaptation of the Afro-American spiritual entitled *Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child*, and that his melody *I Got Rhythm*, was used in the beginning measures of Still’s *Afro-American Symphony* (“his long time signature motive for his improvisation and compositions” (Floyd 21)). In 1924, *Rhapsody in Blue* established Gershwin as a serious composer of American music. In 1936, Gershwin returned to Hollywood to work for RKO on two pictures in which Fred Astaire was the star. In 1937, the next film in which he composed the entire musical score was *A Damsel in Distress*, again with Fred Astaire as the star. After this film, Gershwin worked with his brother for Samuel Goldwyn on the score entitled, *Goldwyn Follies*. Only five songs of this film had been completed when George became ill. George Gershwin died in 1937.

IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIES

The rationale of this unit is to be classified as part of the music history and theory curricular in the piano classroom. The learning outcomes will be evaluated by the music TEKS objective domains and teacher-made assessments. The students will study part-writing rules as well as compositional techniques for melodic and thematic embellishments (such as slurs, grace notes, glissandos, etc.). In addition, the students will study part-writing rules for secondary dominants, their harmonic progressions, and resolutions. The students will study and analyze concepts or techniques for implementing jazzed idioms in musical compositions. Next, students will practice at piano keyboard composing examples of secondary dominants with resolutions. Then, the students will listen to recordings of selections of Gershwin, Joplin, and Still in order to analyze the musical scores in regard to compositional techniques implemented. The students will construct a chart to describe the types of techniques implemented in each measure.

LESSON PLANS

Lesson Plan 1: Introduction to the History of Modern American Music

This unit will be introduced with the lesson entitled, “Introduction to the History of Modern American Music.”

Objective

The students will study the development of music through socio-cultural and historical events (Music TEKS 117.39b.8.5).

Materials Needed

Music History Study Sheet
Music History Chart
Reference Materials and Books
Internet Access / Computer

Procedure

This lesson will begin with a trip to the school library to research the historical background of events, inventions, and socio-cultural influences that impact music. The students will use the reference books, Internet, and history books to gather information about events of the twentieth century and background information. This research paper will be divided into parts. In the first section of the paper, the students will investigate events in the United States from the 1900s to 1930s. The events included in their papers should be on the following topics of American life post-World War I: European immigration, its impact on the work force (specifically in the Northern industrial cities), and community life; racial issues and the influences on the work and living conditions within various communities; and the effects of the differing cultures maintaining their traditions and customs during the creation of the American musical genres.

In section two of the research paper, the students will investigate the Harlem Renaissance movement. The students will identify both the philosophies and the leaders of this movement. Next, the students will identify the contributions made through this movement as well as their significance and how these changes were important to the development of Afro-American music and the arts.

In the third section of the paper, the student will identify important inventions, such as the phonograph, recordings, and others. In addition, the students will discuss the music publishers and the music industry in order to identify its influences in the history of American music.

In the fourth section, the students will analyze the types of musical forms and the important composers of this period. In other words, the students will classify two groups of compositions: popular music and art music. The students will classify the types of musical styles existing during this period. Next, the students will complete the questions on the music history study sheet using the reference materials and complete the music history chart.

During the next two class periods, the students will compare their information using a collaborative group discussion. The students will analyze the general functions of music with regard to the characteristics of styles and formal organization of musical elements implemented in twentieth century music by constructing comparison charts.

Lesson Plan 2: Analysis of Piano Compositions of George Gershwin

Objective

To analyze the musical form and thematic development of George Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* and *Preludes for Piano*. In addition, the students will study Gershwin's contributions to the history of American music (Music TEKS 117.39.b. 8.1).

Materials Needed

Pulse: A History of Music (pages 63-66)

CD Player

George Gershwin CD

Preludes for Piano Scores

Rhapsody in Blue Scores

Construction Paper (assorted colors)

Scissors

Tape

Pencils or Pens

Pianos

Music Activity Kit

Activities in Musical Composition

The Language of Jazz

Procedure

This lesson will begin with the students reading a short biographical sketch on George Gershwin. Next, the students will identify the four stages of his career as a composer. Then the students will complete a written exercise on George Gershwin and his life (from *Pulse: A History of Music*).

The instructor will introduce the next segment of this lesson by giving an explanation of musical form. In addition, examples of the one-part song form, binary (two-part), and ternary (three-part) song forms will be identified by using examples of music from nursery rhymes and patriotic songs. The instructor will explain the terms in the vocabulary list as well as give examples. The instructor will demonstrate on the piano an example of a motif, phrase, period, sequence, and cadence point in order to demonstrate their correlations to musical form. The students will complete written exercises on phrases (refer to *Music Activity Kit* Section III, Exercises 13-15 and *Activities In Musical Composition*, Lessons 1-4).

The students will listen to the composition entitled *Rhapsody in Blue* in order to identify the musical form. In the beginning of the piece, ask the students to identify the number of measures in motif A (motif A is a nine bar phrase). Next, ask the students to identify the number of measures in motif B (motif B starts at measure 10 and ends at measure 14 on the first beat). Ask the students to identify the contrasting differences between motif A and motif B. For the next step, ask the students to determine the beat and measure in which motif A returns (start at measure 16 to the first beat of measure 19). For the next section, the students will analyze the role of the key change in measures 16 to 23 with regards to the treatment of motif A and motif B. Next, the students will analyze the section from measures 24 to 84 to determine if these measures are related to the development of motifs A and B or if they are introducing a new motif. The students will listen to *Rhapsody in Blue* in order to determine the start of the closing theme or motive at measure 324.

During the next class period, the instructor will review the contrasting differences between phrases, periods, sequences, and cadence points. The instructor will give examples of each using one of the songs from the piano repertoire list. For the next step, the students will analyze another song from the piano repertoire list by identifying phrases, periods, sequences, and cadence points. The students will complete written exercises (from *Music Activity Kit*, Section V Exercises 11 and 13; Section VIII Exercises 2-6, Section IX Exercise 7, and Activities in Musical Composition, Lessons 19-23). Next, the students will listen to *Rhapsody in Blue*. The students will analyze the phrase patterns or phrase divisions from measures 77 to 84 (examples of four measure phrases). The students will review measures 1 to 90 in order to identify the number of uneven measures. The students will listen to *Rhapsody in Blue* to determine the number of transitional themes found between measures 84 to 322. The student will discuss their findings in a large group forum. The students will give a verbal summary of the concepts learned about *Rhapsody in Blue*.

In the next step, the instructor will give an explanation of folk idioms using scales, phrases, modes, rhythms, chords, and embellishments. Next, the instructor will demonstrate methods of implementing idioms in music (refer to Lesson 2 in *The Language of Jazz*). The students will complete written exercises from Lessons 32-34, and 40 in *Activities in Musical Composition*. The students will play their solutions to each exercise at the piano. The instructor will evaluate each solution and discuss other alternatives with students.

For the next class period, the instructor will define the terms in the vocabulary list. The students will listen to *Three Preludes for Piano*. For the next step, the students will analyze the number of sections within this piece. Next, the students will label each section of the piece by using strips of colored paper (construction paper). The students will identify each of the strips of paper using capitalized printed letters (the form is ABA or ternary form). Next, the students will analyze each section by comparison. Last, the students will compare the differences between the forms of *Three Preludes for Piano* and *Rhapsody in Blue* as well as discuss their results.

Lesson Plan 3: Analysis of Piano Composition of Scott Joplin

Objective

To study the rhythmic and textural organization within the composition of Scott Joplin and his contributions to the history of American music (Music TEKS 117.39.b. 8.1).

Materials Needed

Pulse: A History of Music (pages 83-90)

CD Player

Scott Joplin CD

The Entertainer Score

Maple Leaf Rag Score

Pencils or Pens

Pianos

Music Activity Kit

Activities in Musical Composition

Rhythm Workbook Level III

Harmony Book II

Jazz Improvisation Book II

The Jazz Language

Procedure

This lesson will begin with the students reading a short biographical sketch on Scott Joplin. Next, the students will complete a written exercise on Scott Joplin (from *Pulse: A History of Music*). The instructor and students will discuss the exercise together.

The instructor will define the terms in the vocabulary list and give examples. For the next step, the instructor will give examples of meter, syncopation, jazzed rhythms, tempo terms, and markings. The students will complete Lessons 3-6 in the *Rhythm Workbook Level III*, and *Music Activity Kit* Section V, Exercises 1, 4-5, 11 and 17. The students will practice the rhythm exercise on pages 54-55 in *Jazz Improvisation*. In the step, the students will practice composing examples of syncopation and rhythmic phrases in meters of 2/4, 3/4, or 4/4. The students will demonstrate their rhythm patterns. The instructor will make alternative suggestions.

On the next class period, the instructor will review concepts of syncopated rhythms. The students will listen to the composition entitled *The Entertainer* in order to classify the meter (as duple or triple, etc.). The students will listen additional times to identify or to determine the pulsation or stress patterns as well as phrases in which syncopation occurs. For the next step, the students will complete written exercises in *Rhythm Workbook Level III* (Lessons 7, 9-10). The instructor and students will discuss these exercises together. Next, using the musical scores, the students will analyze each measure in the first section of *The Entertainer* to identify the measures containing syncopation.

The instructor will explain the definition of texture. For the next step, the instructor will demonstrate examples of texture through using nursery rhymes, canons, and patriotic songs. Next, the students will listen to *The Entertainer* in order to describe the texture as monophonic, homophonic, or polyphonic. In addition, the students will identify the role of textural organization with regards to its relationship to form. The students will analyze other compositional devices such as tied notes and rhythm patterns in both treble and bass clefs. The instructor and students will discuss these concepts together.

During the next class period, the students will listen to *Maple Leaf Rag*. The students will identify the measures containing syncopated rhythms within the first section. Next, the students will complete exercises in *Activities in Musical Composition*

(Lessons 31 and 33). The instructor and students will discuss the solutions together. The students will identify the contrasting differences and similarities between *the Entertainer* and *Maple Leaf Rag*. The class will discuss their results together.

The students will listen to the composition entitled, *Maple Leaf Rag* in order to classify the meter (as duple or triple, etc.). The students will listen additional times to identify or to determine the pulsation or stress patterns as well as phrases in which syncopation occurs. Next, using the musical scores, the students will analyze each measure in the first section of *Maple Leaf Rag* to identify the texture. The instructor and students will discuss the results together. Next, the instructor will explain other methods of implementing jazzed idioms as well as demonstrate these techniques (refer to chapter 3 in *Jazz Improvisation II*). The students will listen additional times to determine the treatment of rhythm to depict the usage of cultural idioms. Using the piano scores, the students will identify the rhythmic structures with regard to notations to achieve textural contrast. The students will write a brief summary comparing the compositional techniques, differences, and similarities between the musical elements of melody, rhythm, and texture usage of Joplin and Gershwin.

Lesson Plan 4: Analysis of Piano Compositions of William Grant Still

Objective

To analyze the roles tonal color, chords, and tempo play to depict characterization of animals within Still's *Five Animal Sketches (Music for Early Childhood)*. The students will study the life and compositions of William Grant Still and his contributions to the history of American music (Music TEKS 117.39.b. 8.1).

Materials Needed

Pulse: A History of Music (pages 97-98)
CD Player
Africa: Piano Music of William Grant Still CD
Five Animal Sketches (Music for Early Childhood) Score
Five Piano Preludes Score
Music Activity Kit
Activities in Musical Composition
Rhythm Workbook Level III
Harmony Book II
Jazz Improvisation Book II
The Jazz Language

Procedure

This lesson begins with the students reading a short biographical sketch on William Grant Still. Next, the students will complete a written exercise on Still in *Pulse: A History of Music*. The instructor and students will discuss the exercise together. The instructor will explain the definitions for the terms in the vocabulary list. Next, the instructor will

explain the theoretical rules, harmonic progressions, and chord structures using examples. The students will complete exercises in *Music Activity Kit* (Section VII, Exercise 10-11) and *Harmony Book II* (Lessons 1-5). The students will play their solutions on the piano. The instructor will demonstrate examples of diagramming chords (refer to *The Jazz Language* Lesson 2). The students will practice diagramming chord in various keys. The instructor will make corrections as needed.

During the next class period, the instructor will explain modes. The instructor will give examples of the constructing modes from major scales (refer to Lesson 3 in *The Jazz Language*). Next, the students will practice constructing modes from major scales in various keys. The students will play their examples on the piano. The instructor will make corrections as needed. The students will listen to the composition entitled, *Five Animal Sketches (Music for Early Childhood)* in order to identify the implementation of tonal color to depict various characterizations of animals through pitch and tempo. The students will listen additional times to determine the names of the animals represented in the piece. The students will analyze other compositional devices such as intervallic qualities and chords with regards to their role in depicting characterizations. The students will view the piano score to identify the intervals and harmonic structure.

During the next class period, the instructor will explain the theoretical rule for composing dominant seventh, ninth, and thirteenth chords. Next, the students will practice composing these chords in various keys. The students will play their examples on the piano. For the next step, the instructor will explain the resolutions and alterations for secondary dominants (refer to Lessons 5 and 7 in *The Jazz Language*). The students will complete a written exercise by composing secondary dominants and polychords. The students will play their examples on the piano. The students will listen to *Five Piano Preludes*. The students will identify the harmonic progression within the first section. The students will listen to determine the difference between *Prelude I* and *Prelude II*. The students will discuss their results with the instructor. The students will listen to determine the difference between *Prelude III* and *Prelude IV*. The students will discuss their results with the instructor. The students will listen to determine the difference between *Prelude IV* and *Prelude V*. The students will discuss their results with the instructor. The students will compare the similarities between *Prelude II* and *Prelude IV*. The students will discuss their ideas.

Last, the students will write a brief summary comparing the compositional techniques all three composers. In addition, the students will evaluate each of the compositions with regard to form, style, and harmonic structures as well as give their reactions to the compositions studied.

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Analyzing Some Classic American Music for Piano by Joplin, Still, and Gershwin. Enetta Nelson Rose. Read more. 176 college non-music majors recorded their preference for 19 musical examples in varying popular and non-popular styles. Subjects completed a Personal Information Form to determine their years of music [Show full abstract] training and specific types of music training. Results showed that subjects with five years or more of music training gave significantly greater overall music preference ratings than subjects with fewer years of training. Differences were also found between subjects with three differing amounts of training for instrumental jazz, orchestral classical, vocal classical, and American composers such as Gershwin, Joplin, and Still are known throughout the world. This international recognition has classified the compositions by these composers as extraordinary. The contributions made by George Gershwin include merging classical music with jazz. He gained recognition and fame after he composed a jazz piece for Paul Whiteman's band. The composition mentioned above is entitled Rhapsody in Blue. Scott Joplin contributed to compositional techniques implemented in the Ragtime style of jazz. One of his popular compositions is entitled The Maple Leaf Rag. Another significant The 15 American classics in this collection have been masterfully arranged for two pianos, four hands. Piano - Intermediate; Late Intermediate Selections by George and Ira Gershwin, Thomas Fats Waller, Scott Joplin, Irving Berlin, Jerome Kern and more. Arranged by Don Heitler, Geoff Haydon, Jim Lyke, and John Arpin. This edition: 2 copies required. This book is fun to play as two piano duets. Some standard pieces arranged for the average player. Was this review useful? Yes No. Classical 2011. Spanish Music for Piano (Mono Version) - Single. 1954. Gershwin: Rhapsody In Blue & An American In Paris. 2009. Leonard Pennario: The Early Years 1950-1958, Vol. 2. 2006. Gershwin: Piano Concerto in F Major. 2000. Russia.

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