

ACTIVITIES

INTERMEDIATE LEVEL

(GRADES 7-9)



Activities for Listening

The Archive contains a wealth of material for students to listen to and learn from, either as an individual, in a small group, or even in a full class setting. Listening activities can be purely illustrative, or educators can also choose to include an assessment/evaluation component whereby students are tested on what they have learned. Use our Listening Response Form to help guide your students' listening experiences.

Listening & Learning

Use selections from the Archive to illustrate:

- different rhythmic and melodic patterns, harmonies, textures and form (choice of selections will vary depending on specific goals)
- different instruments; assess students' understanding and listening abilities by then having them listen to and identify the instruments in various pieces of Archive music

TIP: Click on the Catalogue Link at the top of the Archive webpage. You can then initiate a search by Instrument which will give you information on which instruments are featured in a performance on the Archive and who the players are.

- different configurations, e.g., solos, duets, trios, quartets, and so on; test students afterward by having them listen to and identify these different kinds of ensemble configurations

TIP: Click on Band to obtain an alphabetical list of the bands featured in the Archive. Enter a keyword such as, e.g., 'quartet' into the search bar, to be provided with a sublist of all the quartets with performances on the site.

- jazz as a style of music compared with other styles such as classical, rock, folk or country; initiate a discussion about what it means for a piece to be classified in a certain way; assess students by having them identify and classify new pieces of music, providing justification for their choice.
- characteristics of the variety of styles within the jazz genre, e.g., big band/swing, latin, be-bop, fusion, etc.
- the use of themes and motifs in music; have students listen to and pick out the themes that persist through a piece of music

Listening & Responding

1. Same Old Song? (Individual)

Objective: to have students learn how different artists can interpret the same material differently; how the style of the artists, different instrumentation and different musical choices can affect the end result.

TIP: Click on the Catalogue Link at the top of the site page, then on Track-Clip to obtain an alphabetical listing of all the clips contained on the site. Any song which has been played by more than one artist or group will have a separate listing for each performance

Materials: Computer with internet access
Listening Response Form

Activity: Select a piece of music from the Archive that is performed by more than one artist (for example ‘Autumn Leaves’ is performed by Donna Barber Trio and also by the Trombone Workshop Octet; ‘Come Rain Or Come Shine’ is performed by Nancy Walker Trio and Sam Noto Quintet; etc.) Play both versions for the students (or have them listen at home or outside of class time as part of the assignment).

Have students, using the Guided Response Form as a starting point, write a one or two page response where they discuss the differences (and similarities) between the two interpretations, using appropriate terminology learned in class to discuss rhythm, texture, expression, instrumentation, musical choices, etc.

2. The Artist’s Development

Objective: To encourage students to consider and evaluate the changes that an artist goes through over time in their artistic development.

Activity: Students select a performer from the Archive for whom multiple recordings, spanning a reasonable amount of time, exist. They listen to and compare the performances, noting the things that have changed in the artist’s playing over time, as well as aspects that are more or less consistent, making the artist’s style ‘unique’ and recognizable.

3. Same Instrument, Different Sound

Objective: Students learn and explore how the same instrument can sound very different in the hands of different artists. The definition of ‘instrument’ here can be extended to include the human voice.

Activity: Students select an instrument that is featured by more than one performer on the Archive. From the list of artists, they select two who exhibit different performance styles. Students listen and write a report comparing and contrasting, using appropriate terminology, each individual musicians’ tone and style.

4. Making It Up: Exploring Improvisation (Class or Small Group)

Objective: to encourage students to think critically about what improvisation involves

Activity: Start with a class discussion of what they think improvisation means. Then play piece of music from the Archive that features improvisation. Initiate a discussion on what the students think musical improvisation might involve. Is it a free-for-all? Or are there 'rules' to improvisation?

Following this, have students sit in a circle and create a collective impromptu short story or rap; as musicians would have a key, so the students are given a topic for the story; as a musical piece would have internal structure, so should the story have a beginning, middle and end; as musicians combine and communicate so that the performance has cohesion, so should the story flow as if it has one voice.

Play the same piece of music again from the Archive; discuss whether the students now have a different perspective on improvisation after having had the experience of trying to create a cohesive story as a group, impromptu

Activities for Research

1. Six Degrees of Separation (Group or Class)

Objective: To encourage students to explore the many ways in which artists in a given field are connected to and influence each other; students additionally exercise and expand their computer research skills

Activity: Students create a chart indicating links of different kinds between musicians, instruments, and songs on the Archive, e.g., X plays sax with band ABC on the recording of song 123; Y is connected to X because he also plays sax; P is connected to X because she played with band ABC; Z is connected to X because they perform in another recording of song 123; R is connected to X because they are the composer of song 123 (note there may be multiple links between two people)

If different groups do this same activity, compare the charts to see how they are the same/different

2. Jazz Newsletter (Individual)

Objective: Students combine research skills, writing skills and musical knowledge

Activity: Students research and report on the life and musical career of one of the seven Canadian jazz icons with a documentary featured on the Archive. Students listen to the documentary, view the artist's biography and career highlights and listen to their performances, and then write a report in the form of a journal or newspaper article.

Students' reports can then be combined into a larger 'anthology' with material organized by artist.

3. Jazz Democracy (Class discussion; Individual report)

Objective: To encourage students to think about what it means to be a citizen in a democratic society by comparing it with the role of musicians in a jazz band.

Activity: Initiate a class discussion on the roles of musicians in a musical group in terms of individual freedom (improvisation), cooperation, shared responsibility of members and leadership. Then have students write a short essay where they draw on the similarities and interrelatedness of these roles with those of citizens of a democratic society.

4. Be a Music Critic: Fact vs. Opinion (Individual)

Objective: To encourage students to think critically about the various aspects of a musical performance; to increase writing skills; to enhance awareness of the difference between subjective responses to art and objective responses

Activity: Students select a song from the Archive and write a review of the performance as if they were a music critic. Have students separately comment on what aspects of their review are based in fact and objectivity and what aspects of their review are subjective, reflecting their own personal opinion and response.

Activities for Creative Expression

1. Art from Music (Individual/Small Group)

Objective: Students explore how an auditory art form (music) can be expressed or represented visually

Materials: Computer with internet access
Poster board
Materials with a variety of textures and colours (e.g., paint, cloth, found objects such as leaves, paper, plastic, cardboard)

Activity: Students listen to a selection from the Archive (if students are working in groups, each group can be given a different selection or the same selection). Over several listenings, they choose materials that they feel expresses the music in some way. They then create a collage/sculpture that expresses the mood, texture, colour and feel of the piece, together with a short paragraph explaining why they chose the materials and layout that they did.

2. Music Tells a Story (Individual)

Objective: To encourage students to think about how even music without words can still tell a story or bring to mind a certain kind of narrative.

Activity: Students write a short story or screenplay that might be accompanied, as a score, by a selected piece of instrumental music from the Archive. The piece should be roughly the length of the music, and the action/narrative and mood should shift in keeping with the music. Students can also be asked to supply an additional paragraph explaining why they think that their story/play expresses the selected music.

3. Marketing Music (Individual or Group)

Objective: To encourage students to consider how design, colour and form might be used in the marketing of a musical event.

Activity: Students select a concert recording from the Archive and design a poster to 'advertise' that concert. The poster should be eye-catching, informative and expressive in some way of the kind of music that that listeners can expect to hear if they attend. Depending on resources and technical expertise, the posters can be designed using poster board and art supplies or on a computer using a graphic design program.

4. Produce a CD (Individual or Group)

Objective: Students combine musical knowledge, research skills and artistic design skills to put together a jazz album

Activity: Students 'create' an album by choosing a 'theme' for the album and then selecting 10 songs from the Archive that express that theme. Possible themes include a selection of pieces that are all done by the same artist/band or composer; pieces that are all the same instrument, etc.

They then design a CD cover that includes information about the songs, the artists, composers and recording details on the inside.