

## **Jazz and Popular Music and the Development of a Distinctively American Music**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

My serious musical experiences began in fifth grade with string bass lessons through my school's instrumental music program. Mr. Ronald Anson, a string bass player with our local symphony orchestra, gave these lessons weekly. I would wait eagerly every week to be pulled out of my art class and taken to a storeroom off the cafeteria for my lesson. These weekly lessons continued through the sixth grade. In junior high school I entered the string orchestra. This organization met everyday as a class and performed six concerts a year. These concerts were a thrill, with the auditorium filled with anxious parents, grandparents and siblings. Once I saw the effect music had on the audience, I was hooked. No longer interested in becoming an astronaut, I now knew music was my calling.

As I entered high school, the doors to more musical opportunities opened. I auditioned and made the jazz ensemble. This was exciting! In the jazz ensemble, I was the only bass player. No longer was there a section of basses to cover any mistakes that I might make. Needless to say, I put in overtime working out my parts. It was during this time that I realized that not only was music my calling, but jazz music was my love.

My high school director, Mr. David Holcomb, was an accomplished jazz pianist. He honed my improvisational and technical skills. But more importantly, he introduced me to an aspect of music just as important as performing. That was the history behind the music. Although we did not have a music history class in high school, Mr. Holcomb would give us some background about the music we were performing, whether it was an orchestral piece by Bach or a jazz piece by Thad Jones.

Today, as a performer in both the symphonic and jazz idioms, I am acutely aware of the decreasing attendance at these concerts. I believe that if more young people were exposed to the history of music through the listening and study of quality works, they would realize the connections to the music they listen to daily.

In the music history class I teach, we begin with the study of early music and continue through the twentieth century. We study the major composers, as well as the economic and social issues of various style periods, and identify the changes that separate one style period from the next. In my class I have band, orchestra and choral students along with students from the general school population.

In the curriculum unit I am creating, my intention is to show the connections between popular music and art music. These two genres combined have produced a distinctively American style of music.

## **UNIT BACKGROUND**

This six-week long unit will comprise a study of the influence of popular music on American art music composers in the early twentieth century. This unit will be used after the units on Stravinsky and Schoenberg. The American art music composers we will study include George Gershwin, William Grant Still, and Aaron Copland. We will begin our study with music from the nineteenth century and progress through the middle 1930s. This was a time when American composers were looking for a truly American style and breaking away from European molds. During the course of this unit, students will listen to the music of, and read biographical information about, each composer studied.

Through our work in previous units, students will understand that European music has a rich and lengthy past. The students will have traced European music from the Middle Ages, and studied American popular music. The question that will be asked is, does American music have an ancestry? Aaron Copland and a group of compatriots began to look for this ancestry. As stated by Howard Pollack in *Aaron Copland: The Life and Works of an Uncommon Man*, “[this] endeavor occupied him and some unnamed colleagues until the late 1920s.” This search for ancestry led Copland to the conclusion that there was not a “vital concert tradition to build on” (113). Without this concert tradition, Copland began to look at the music he had heard while growing up in Brooklyn “rather commonplace jazz tunes and music of the ‘Old Black Joe’ variety. These, then, are my material, and I must accept them for what they are” (Pollack 113).

My hope is that by the end of this curriculum unit, students will understand the influence of one style of music on another. They will begin to actively listen to their favorite type of music for influences from other styles. Once they have made this connection, I hope they will understand and appreciate that there is something of value in all music.

## **OVERVIEW OF AMERICAN COMPOSERS**

While European concert audiences were reeling from Stravinsky’s *Petrushka* (1911), and *The Rite of Spring* (1913), and Schoenberg’s *Pierrot Lunaire* (1912), American art composers were experimenting with popular music styles. Our first composer to be studied is George Gershwin. He is significant in that his piece, *Rhapsody in Blue* (1924), is the pivotal piece to introduce what was then called “symphonic jazz.” William Grant Still, an African American composer, will be studied for the use of jazz elements in his *Afro-American Symphony* (1930). Our last composer of study will be Aaron Copland. Considered America’s foremost composer, we will look at his *Three Moods* (1920),

*Music for the Theater* (1925), and his *Piano Concerto* (1926). These pieces are excellent examples of the combination of popular and art music.

### **George Gershwin and the *Rhapsody in Blue* (1924)**

In 1924 a piece of music was written that turned the worlds of both popular and art music upside down. *Rhapsody in Blue*, written for Paul Whiteman and his Palais Royal Orchestra by George Gershwin, to this day is the ultimate combination of popular and art music. The piece was premiered at the Aeolian concert hall in New York on a program arranged by Whiteman entitled, “An Experiment in Modern Music.”

Growing up in New York, Gershwin was very familiar with both the popular music of the day and European art music. He began his music career working for the Remick publishing firm on Tin Pan Alley until he became frustrated with the popular music business. George Gershwin left Remick and began a career in musical theater, in which he had great success. His work in this field would set the standard for Broadway musicals of the 1920s and 1930s.

In 1920, a bandleader by the name of Paul Whiteman brought his group into New York to play at the Palais Royal Restaurant. Within a year they had established a reputation as the premiere dance band in the country. Whiteman had been a violist with the San Francisco Symphony and had led a group for the United States Navy, prior to becoming a bandleader. Whiteman’s success allowed him to pay his musicians the highest rate around, which drew many talented players. Over time, his group included such notable players as Red Nichols, Tommy Dorsey and Bix Beiderbecke. Even Bing Crosby sang with the band.

In New York, Gershwin heard the Paul Whiteman band. The band that Gershwin heard was typically made up of about 12 members. These musicians were extremely versatile, the doubling capability with the three woodwinds alone numbering over fifteen woodwind instruments.

George Gershwin wrote *Rhapsody in Blue* for piano and jazz band. Gershwin submitted the work as a piano score and Paul Whiteman’s principal arranger, Ferde Grofé, scored the music. Grofé arranged *Rhapsody in Blue* for three reeds (doubling on seventeen instruments), two trumpets that double on flugelhorn, two trombones doubling on bass trombone and euphonium, eight violins, two string basses doubling on tuba, banjo, percussion, piano, celeste, and solo piano.

Born Ferdinand Rudolph von Grofé on March 27, 1892 in New York City, Grofé later moved with his family to Los Angeles, California. He came from a musical family; his mother was a music teacher and cellist and his father was an actor and baritone. Grofé was a violist with the Los Angeles Symphony for ten years. He also had a jazz band that played around Los Angeles. It was during this time that he met Paul Whiteman and was

asked to join Whiteman's group as pianist and staff arranger. After the success of the *Rhapsody in Blue*, Grofé went on to write *Mississippi Suite* (1926), as well as his most famous work *The Grand Canyon Suite* (1931), and he became an instructor of orchestration in 1942 at the Juilliard School of Music in New York.

Gershwin seems to generate a new melodic-harmonic language with the use of the flattened third, sixth, and seventh scale degrees, similar to blues. Not only does *Rhapsody in Blue* have a connection to the blues through its melodic-harmonic language, but also through its structure. The blues of the period was not limited to the standard 12-bar variety, but also included a type of moderately fast dance music in popular song form made popular by such musicians as W.C. Handy. Gershwin echoes this, in that there are themes that bring to mind **aaba** or **abab** song forms.

There are many arrangements of *Rhapsody in Blue*; most are for piano, though it is possible to find an arrangement for everything from harmonica and orchestra to banjo ensembles.

After Grofé's 1924 arrangement, Harms publishing company brought out a two-piano reduction in 1925. Gershwin allowed some solo passages to be cut. The publication was the basis for the *Rhapsody in Blue* we know today.

In 1942 a third orchestration by Grofé was published, one edited by Frank Campbell-Watson. This orchestration called for the standard symphonic instrumentation of two flutes, two oboes, three clarinets, two bassoons, three horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, percussion, strings and three saxophones and a banjo.

### **William Grant Still and his *Afro-American Symphony* (1930)**

William Grant Still was born on May 11, 1895, in Woodville, Mississippi. His early musical experiences can be attributed to his grandmother, and by the age of sixteen his primary interest was music. His mother was wary of his determination to become a serious musician and composer. She did not think there was a future for an African-American composer, and enrolled him at Wilberforce University to pursue a career in medicine (Haas 4). While at Wilberforce, Still was able to hone his musical and compositional skills, playing in the university band, learning to play the oboe and clarinet and organizing a string quartet in which he played violin. After graduation Still took on odd jobs to make ends meet and at one point worked for W.C. Handy as an arranger and musician, spending time traveling with Handy's band throughout the South. After spending some time with Handy, Still had the desire to write "meaningful, serious music" (Haas 5). William Grant Still, living in New York at the time, studied with the composer Edgar Varèse in 1923-1925 after applying and being accepted for a scholarship offered in composition to "talented young Negro composers" (Haas 6). Still's attitude toward Varèse and other teachers is reported by his wife Verna Arvey: "When I was groping blindly in my efforts to compose, it was Varèse who pointed out to me the way to

individual expression and who gave me opportunity to hear my music played. I shall never forget his kindness nor that of George W. Chadwick and the instructors at Oberlin” (Haas 6).

As Gershwin’s *Rhapsody in Blue* revealed the characteristics of the blues, so Still expressed his intention in using the blues in a symphony: “I knew I wanted to write a symphony; I knew that it had to be an American work; and I wanted to demonstrate how the Blues, so often considered a lowly expression, could be elevated to the highest musical level” (Haas 11).

The first theme of the *Afro-American Symphony* “displays the essential features such as the ‘blues scale’ of the lowered third and seventh scale degree, a falling melodic contour, and the call-and-response structure” (Murchison 52). As stated by Murchison, Still based “parts of the first movement’s internal sections on the twelve-bar blues form. These internal divisions were incorporated into a modified sonata form, a conventional form used in Western European art music genres of symphony and sonata” (52).

Excerpts from the poems of Paul Laurence Dunbar precede each of its four movements. As stated by Haas, “each movement is designed to portray a specific emotion and the poetic excerpts serve as an extra-musical means of reinforcing this emotion” (12). The themes were listed in Still’s sketchbook in categories such as passionate, happy, dramatic, plaintive, and barbaric. Still provided some insight into these themes in a speech given to a composer’s workshop in 1967: “Long before writing this symphony I had recognized the musical value of the *Blues* and had decided to use a theme in the *Blues* idiom as a basis for a major symphonic composition. When I was ready to launch this project I did not want to use a theme some folk singer had already created, but decided to create my own theme in the *Blues* idiom” (Haas 11).

The *Afro-American Symphony* was dedicated to Irving Schwerke and premiered by the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra under the direction of Dr. Howard Hanson in 1931.

The use of the banjo in a symphonic work may be interesting to students. According to Haas, this is “*probably* the first use of the banjo in a major symphonic work. None of the sources comment on this fact, but both Verna Arvey and William Grant Still are of the opinion that this is the first serious usage of this instrument” (13). Although, we may question what they meant by “serious usage,” Gershwin’s *Rhapsody in Blue* (1924) and John Alden Carpenter’s *Skyscrapers* (1924) both used banjo.

## **Aaron Copland**

Copland was no stranger to popular music. As Pollack states, “I [Copland] was born in Brooklyn, and that in Brooklyn we used to hear jazz around all the time – it was just an ordinary thing” (113). It was especially after hearing jazz played in Europe that Copland began to consciously work with jazz elements.

After returning from Paris, Copland sought out jazz in New York. In Copland's 1927 article "Jazz Structure," he discussed the importance of jazz to American composers; as Pollack states, "In this early essay he emphasized jazz's rhythm, whose growing complexities he traced from ragtime hits of Irving Berlin to the fox-trot to newer techniques that could more definitely be described as polyrhythmic . . . He [Copland] could not locate any comparable rhythmic phenomenon in the European repertory . . ." (115). Jazz elements used by European composers were treated as a novelty, but Copland reasoned that "since it [jazz] is the music an American has heard as a child, it will be more and more frequently in his symphonies and concertos" (Pollack 115).

### ***Three Moods (1920)***

Jazz was being used by American art music composers even before Milhaud's *La Creation du monde* (1923) and Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* (1924). Copland's piano piece entitled *Three Moods* (1920) incorporates jazz elements. The individual movements are titled "Embittered", "Wistful", and "Jazzy". Copland's third movement is based on two jazz melodies that Copland himself said, "ought to make the old professors sit up and take notice" (Pollack 44). As Pollack continues "this finale opens with a tune akin to Walter Donaldson's 'Makin' Whoopee,' while its contrasting theme was derived from a theme by Jerome Kern. Upon hearing Copland play this movement in 1921, Nadia Boulanger "immediately accepted him as a student..." (46).

### ***Music for the Theatre (1925)***

*Music for the Theatre* (1925) (originally titled *Incidental Music for an Imaginary Drama*) was written at the request of the League of Composers, for Serge Koussevitzky and members of the Boston Symphony. Koussevitzky was director of the Boston Symphony from 1924-1949. He had a close relationship with Aaron Copland, and was a champion of American symphonic music. Koussevitzky helped advance the careers of many American composers, including Copland, Roy Harris, and Walter Piston.

Copland's *Music for the Theatre* was scored for a very small orchestra. Depending upon the number of string players, Copland called for a total of as few as eighteen musicians. As Pollack's book continues "He [Copland] seems to have had in mind the kind of commercial pit bands that form the background to the work-as well as, perhaps, Milhaud's *La Creation du monde*, which was similarly inspired by jazz" (128).

With *Music for the Theatre*, Copland seemed to be commenting on life in New York. As Pollack's book states, "Although writers often used the term 'Americana' to describe some later Copland scores, especially those inspired by rural landscape and folklore, the term as used in the 1920s denoted any characteristic depiction of the American scene...*Music for the Theatre* is as much a work of Americana as anything Copland ever wrote" (132).

There are five parts to this piece: “Prologue,” “Dance,” “Interlude,” “Burlesque,” and “Epilogue.” Copland, according to Pollack, “used the word *part* as opposed to the more traditional *movement*, thereby suggesting not only the relatively brief length of the individual sections but the striking emotional distance from part to part, which, like theatrical incidental music, almost presumes the kind of lapsed time that spoken dialogue or changes of scenery would bring” (128).

A jazzy trumpet fanfare, introducing the work’s main motive, begins the first movement. The score instructs the trumpet player to play “sharp, fast, clear, nervous;” this in imitation of jazz playing at the time. The strings and winds then “develop a kind of blues chorale through the second motive that by the end of the “A” section takes over and quiets the trumpet’s fanfare” (Pollack 129). Copland used performance practices taken from the jazz musicians of the day. The “Burlesque” movement uses jazz mutes, and occasional directions for the players to play “a little sharp” or “a little flat”. The quoting of the popular song “The Sidewalks of New York” (1904) in the “Dance” movement echoes the practice of quoting popular songs by jazz musicians. The “Interlude” has a different feel. It depicts “that lonely, night-in-the-city ambience” (Pollack 129). It gets this feel by creating a “modal haziness one might call bimodality” (Pollack 129). As the melody played by the English horn cadences in one mode the orchestra enters in another.

### ***Piano Concerto (1926)***

At 25 years old, Copland composed his *Piano Concerto* (1926). The concerto was composed for Serge Koussevitzky and the Boston Symphony, with the composer to play the solo part. The score was dedicated to Copland’s patron, Alma Morgenthau Wertheim. There is musical evidence that Copland had composed some of the music used in the *Piano Concerto* during his Paris years, for the ballet “Longchamps” (Pollack).

The concerto is in two movements: a slow first movement that connects to a fast movement. Both of these movements use popular music, with blues being used in the first movement and jazz used in the second. According to Pollack, “Copland uses such styles metaphorically, in order, if not actually to portray New York, at least to impart a sense of life in a great metropolis” (134). There is a section of the second movement where Copland conjures the image of big city traffic in a passage of stretto brass. The piano in this concerto “functions alternately as a reflective observer and high-spirited participant” (134).

The *Piano Concerto* calls for an unusually large orchestra, with the use of an alto saxophone that doubles on soprano saxophone and a section of five percussionists. Copland also borrowed some Stravinskyian techniques, including “biting harmonies and complex polyrhythms that make the work challenging for players and an earful for listeners” (135).

The first movement features three distinct ideas: an opening declamation; a romantic theme; and a bluesy melody “derived, said the composer, ‘from a traditional blues’” (Pollack 135). The second movement builds on two ideas: a hectic, bustling theme using Charleston rhythms and a relaxed theme, as Pollack states, “one parodistic to the point of goofiness” (Pollack 135). These themes are interwoven with a return to the romantic theme near the end of the second movement. Even though the first movement traces an arch and the second movement is in a modified sonata form, Pollack states, “Copland does not so much develop these ideas as order and reorder, merge and transform them; beginnings are vague, endings uncertain, and climaxes unpredictably spaced” (135). The conclusion is tonally ambiguous, and “intentionally leaves one hanging” (Pollack).

At its premiere the audience responded by filing out of the concert hall during its performance. In following performances, it was also met with hissing during and after it was performed, even in rehearsals, from the musicians themselves. Like most of Copland’s works from this period, it did not attract a large concert-going audience, but it remains in the repertory and still appears in concert halls all over the world.

## IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

This unit is intended for use as part of the music history and literature curriculum in my classroom. This unit will bridge the unit on popular music with the unit on the twentieth-century avant-garde. The lessons will focus on the following TEKS strands of Historical/cultural, Perception/analysis and Response/evaluation established by the Texas Education Agency (TEA):

- MH&L TEKS 117.61.c.5 **Historical/cultural**. The student relates music to history, to society, and to culture.
- MH&L TEKS 117.61.c.1.A **Perception/analysis**. The student defines melody, harmony, rhythm, and texture of music listened to, using standard terminology.
- MH&L TEKS 117.62.c.6 **Response/evaluation**. The student responds to and evaluates music and musical performance.

Before the study of composers and their music, students will be asked to do some background research on the social and economic events of the time. They will be asked such questions as, “What was the economic situation of America and Europe?”; “What big world events were taking place?”; “How was the relationship between America and Europe?”. We will then put these events on a timeline. This research will help the students understand daily life at the time of the composer.

After our initial research on the social and economic events of the time, students will listen to American jazz and European art music of the period in order to adjust their hearing to the music of the early twentieth century. This listening is important, due to the fact that what we term jazz and popular music today is very different from what those



terms meant in the early twentieth century. Students will be led through a discussion of what those differences are.

Students will listen to quality recordings of the pieces outlined in the unit. They will be asked questions such as, “What instruments do you hear?”; “What makes this piece sound like jazz?”; “Have we heard any piece before, that is similar to this one?”; “What makes this piece sound like art music?” This will help the students develop their listening skills and alert them to what they need to be listening for. Again, the quality of the recording is important. With Gershwin, there are many renditions of *Rhapsody in Blue*; some have been cut up so much that they are not a true representation of the work.

We will have available, in our listening lab, pieces that we don’t cover in this unit. This will give students the opportunity to broaden their listening knowledge of a distinctively American music. Also, if resources and time allow, we will take advantage of seeing any of the Houston area professional or college ensembles that might be programming American composers.

## **LESSON PLANS**

### **Lesson Plan 1: Listening**

#### ***Objectives***

Students will identify the characteristics of a composition that make it either jazz or art music. (TEKS 117.61.c.1.A)

#### ***Materials needed***

CD Player

Chalk or Whiteboard

Notebook paper

CD of Gershwin’s *Rhapsody in Blue*

#### ***Procedure***

The lesson begins with a discussion about jazz and art music. We will begin by talking about today’s jazz and art music, and I will guide the discussion to jazz and art music of the early twentieth century. The discussion will be guided to early twentieth century jazz by questions such as ; Do you believe the jazz music of today is the same as the jazz music of the early 1900’s?, How might jazz music of the early 1900’s differ from today’s jazz music? (Jazz music of the early twentieth century differs from the jazz music of today in instrumentation and improvisation). Students will then listen to *The Castle Perfect Trot* (1914) by James Reese Europe and Ford T. Dabney. Students will be guided to listen to the instrumentation (especially the banjo and flute), tempo and the general feel of the music. Also, students will listen for improvised solos. We will brainstorm characteristics of early jazz and art music, and list those characteristics on the board. Some of the characteristics that can be listed are; use of flute and banjo, more of a two-

beat feel, no improvised solos (almost everything was written out in the part) and the use of the flattened third-the blue note.

Students will take their notebook paper and make two columns, one for jazz characteristics and the other for art music characteristics. Students will then actively listen to Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* and write down the characteristics they hear in each category. The jazz characteristics from this listening include such things as use of the blue note (flattened third), bending of notes, a swing feel, and use of brass instruments. The art music characteristics found in this listening include such things as strings, and multi-movements.

After hearing the piece in its entirety, we will have a discussion about what characteristics we heard in the piece. These will be written on the board. We will then wrap up the lesson by asking two questions: 1) Can this piece be considered art music?; and 2) Can this piece be considered jazz?

## **Lesson Plan 2: Comparative Listening**

### ***Objective***

Students will listen to two different performances of the same piece and compare and contrast the performances. (TEKS 117.62.c.6)

### ***Materials needed***

CD Player  
CD of Copland's Piano Concerto with Bernstein conducting  
CD of Copland's Piano Concerto with Copland conducting

### ***Procedure***

We will begin this lesson with a discussion of musical performance. What exactly is a musical performance? For example, when a song is recorded, is that it? Is that the way the song should be performed from that point on? Students today equate a song with a group. Even in concert, the group will stick very close to the way the song was recorded. Judgements are even made by students when another group plays someone else's song. We will turn our discussion to concert music, and the fact that each performance is different. The piece is constantly evolving; conductors have their own interpretations of the piece. One performance or recording does not make the piece.

Students will actively listen to a recording of Aaron Copland's Piano Concerto with Leonard Bernstein conducting and Aaron Copland as pianist. The students will compare and contrast this with a recording of the Piano Concerto with Aaron Copland conducting. We will discuss the differences in interpretation between these two performances. The comparisons can be made as to tempo, feel, soloist's interpretation, etc...

### **Lesson Plan 3: Listening**

#### ***Objectives***

Students will actively listen to music and discuss the composer's use of timbres to create a particular emotion. (TEKS 117.61.c.5)

#### ***Materials needed***

CD Player

CD of Copland's "Dance" and "Burlesque" from his *Music for the Theatre*

Notebook paper

#### ***Procedure***

I will begin the lesson by leading a discussion on the ways a composer can portray a picture or image with music. Examples to use in the introduction of this lesson can include the use of the minor key to create a feeling of sadness, foreboding, longing, etc...and the use of the major key to create a feeling of lightheartedness, happiness, joy. The use of certain notes to create a mental picture of a certain color can also be explored. We will review our discussion of Moussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* (1874). The discussion will contrast music that portrays artwork with music that has more general programmatic implications.

We will listen to the two parts from Copland's *Music for the Theatre* and discuss what we hear. The questions that will be asked are: "How do these pieces give us a feeling of life in the big city?" Examples can include such items as the use of the trumpets that mimic car horns, etc...and "Can we hear the musical quote from "Sidewalks of New York" in the "Dance?" I will play the melody "Sidewalks of New York" on the piano for the students to hear before we begin our listening. This will be a guided discussion with students taking notes on what they hear.

### **Lesson Plan 4: Listening**

#### ***Objectives***

Students will identify a melody using standard terminology (TEKS 117.61.c.1.A) and contrast it with the performance of the same melody in a different context (TEKS 117.62.c.6).

#### ***Materials needed***

CD player

Chalk or Whiteboard

Notebook paper

CD of Gershwin's *I Got Rhythm*

CD of William Grant Still's *Symphony No. 1* 3<sup>rd</sup> Movement

### ***Procedure***

The lesson begins with a discussion on borrowing from one composer to another. The discussion will be guided by pointing out the use of sampling in music today. Although sampling is a direct use of another artist's recorded material, the discussion will lead to the borrowing of melodic ideas from composers.

We will listen to a recording of George Gershwin's *I Got Rhythm*. The students will identify the melody. Once the melody is identified the students will sing the melody. Once the melody has been sung as performed on the recording the students will begin to vary the melody's rhythm. The question will be asked "Does varying the rhythm change the melody?" The answer should be no. The pitches make a melody not the rhythm.

The students will then listen to a recording of William Grant Still's *Symphony No. 1* mvmt III. They will identify the melody of Gershwin's *I Got Rhythm* when it is quoted in Still's Symphony. They will indicate that they have heard it by raising their hands. The students will also listen for any other characteristics found in *Symphony No. 1* that were in Gershwin's piece. These characteristics include the use of the "blue note," instrumentation, etc... The students will write these characteristics down on their paper. After listening we will list the characteristics on the board.

We will end the lesson with a discussion on why composers chose to quote other composers music. The discussion will include ideas such as, popularity of the piece quoted, the importance of the piece quoted to American music, and the influence of the composer quoted to the composer who borrowed it.

### **Lesson Plan 5: Listening**

#### ***Objectives***

Students will identify a melody and harmony using standard terminology (TEKS 117.61.c.1.A) and contrast it with the performance of the same melody and harmony in a different context (TEKS 117.62.c.6).

#### ***Materials needed***

CD player  
Chalk or Whiteboard  
Notebook paper  
CD of Pachelbel's *Canon in D Major*  
CD of Blues Traveler's *Hook*

#### ***Procedure***

The lesson begins by talking about popular music of today. We will discuss the use of borrowing from other composers and the popularity of sampling in popular music. We will discuss the term "Hook" as it relates to popular music. The term is used to identify

the musical motive that is repeated over and over to “hook” the listener. The part of the music that the listener comes away humming.

We will listen to Pachelbel’s Canon and review Pachelbel’s biographical facts. We will discuss the instrumentation (violins, Cello, DoubleBass, etc...). The students will then be asked to sing the “hook” in the Canon. The hook is the repeating progression in the piece.

The students will then listen to Blues Traveler’s piece *Hook* (1994). The students will be asked what the similarities are between *Hook* and Pachelbel’s *Canon in D Major*. *Hook* contains the same progression as *Canon in D Major* and the same melody with slight variations.

We will end the lesson with a discussion on the influence of Art music composers on popular artists of today. Questions such as, does the use of an Art music composers piece seem to elevate the status of the popular music artist? Does the popular music artist seem more educated and knowledgeable?

## ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Works Cited

Haas, Robert Bartlett. *William Grant Still and the Fusion of Cultures in American Music*. Los Angeles: Black Sparrow Press, 1972.

A detailed book on the works of William Grant Still, and biographical information. Has an extensive bibliography.

Pollack, Howard. *Aaron Copland: The Life and Works of an Uncommon Man*. Urbana, IL: Univ. of Illinois UP, 2000.

A detailed book on the life and works of Aaron Copland, his relations with other composers, and his thoughts on popular music of the time. Has a complete list of Copland's works and an extensive bibliography.

Smith, Catherine Parsons. *William Grant Still: A Study in Contradictions*. Berkeley, CA: Univ. of California Press, 2000.

A collection of essays on William Grant Still, including coverage of his years in Little Rock, Arkansas, the Harlem Renaissance, and the *Afro-American Symphony*. Numerous musical examples and sketches of music by William Grant Smith.

### Supplemental Resources

#### *Teacher Resources*

Arvey, Verna. *In One Lifetime*. Fayetteville: U of Arkansas P, 1984.

A detailed biography of William Grant Still by his wife Verna Arvey. Arvey was very active in the music scene in New York and knew many of the important composers of the time.

Bordman, Gerald. *American Musical Theater: A Chronicle*. New York: Oxford UP, 1985.

Chronicles American musicals show-by-show and season-by-season. Information on Gershwin musicals.

Dickson, Harry Ellis. *Gentlemen, More Dolce Please*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1969.

Detailed information on Serge Koussevitzky.

Ewen, David. *The Story of George Gershwin*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1943.

Detailed biography of George Gershwin.

Oja, Carol. *Making Music Modern: New York in the 1920's*. New York: Oxford UP, 2003.

An exploration of the classical music scene in New York during the 1920s and early 1930s. Profiles of many composers, including Aaron Copland.

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Gunther Schueller explores the great jazz musicians of the 1920s. Information on Bix Beiderbecke, Jelly Roll Moton, and others. Information on big-band composers such as Duke Ellington. Has analysis of many great jazz recordings of the time.

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### ***Student Resources***

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Copland's life told in an interesting and amusing fashion. Tells how Copland develops his style through his experiences over the years.

\_\_\_\_\_. *George Gershwin (Getting to Know the World's Greatest Composers)*. CT: Children's Music Press, 1994.

Material on Gershwin presented in a way that makes students feel that the composer is a real person, not just a dead composer.

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