

SCHEME OF WORK 2: What processes for evaluating pupil work can be adopted to give constructive feedback and encourage peer review?

LESSON 1

TOPIC AND PURPOSE

This lesson will set the scene and establish the artistic context. It will help learners develop knowledge and understanding of backbone realisation and creative ensemble practice.

OBJECTIVE

To introduce chromatic melody by listening to *Blue Monk* by Thelonius Monk.

Improvising rhythmically as a group and asking “what works?”

Realising a rhythmic section of *Blue Appropriation*.

ENGAGEMENT

Learners will develop an understanding of collaboration through becoming a creative ensemble. First they shall use un-tuned percussion. Learners will then extend this knowledge through using instruments to improvise and compose as a whole class ensemble.

STICK-ABILITY

Learners will develop knowledge and understanding of how to observe and reflect on their practice, informing future work.

DIFFERENTIATION

Embedding:

Learners will be able to copy another player's riff and have a sense of what does and doesn't work in the ensemble.

Enhancing:

Many learners will go beyond this and create a rhythmic pattern that fits into the texture; they will be able to comment on what is and isn't working.

Extending: some will be able to create a distinctive riff, will be able to identify successful aspects of the ensemble work as well as less successful aspects and suggest solutions to address these.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Improvising rhythmically as a class ensemble; introducing chromatic melody and realising a section of backbone.

ACTIVITY ONE:

Step 1: Set-up.

Each person should take a piece of unpitched percussion. Have the class form a circle. Teacher plays a pulse. Everyone joins in, aiming to get the pulse as accurate as possible.

Step 2: Create Context.

Ask the class to play very quietly so that you can speak over the pulse. Count the pulses in groups of 8, and ask everyone to accent the 1st beat.

Variation: Just play on the 1st beat, as the group tries to maintain the pulse through the silence.

STARTER

Call and response using body percussion.

Commentary on step 1:

Aim for instruments that can make rhythmic patterns and a variety of sounds.

Commentary on step 2:

Move through this stage quickly – this is to ground the meter. If using silence variation, it is ok to make the pulse more physical.

ASSESSMENT

Learners will evaluate their own learning and others progression through peer to peer discussion.

They will refine and evaluate their creative processes and set personal and group goals.

Step 3: Improvising.

Over the pulse, tell the class to keep going and that you're going to add a pattern that fits into the 8-beat cycle. Add your pattern (riff/loop/beat).

Encourage the class to add their own patterns in their own time.

Commentary on step 3:

If it falls apart go back to the pulse and add beats in smaller groups. If pupils are struggling, get them to copy someone nearby who is holding their rhythm solidly.

Step 4: Inning and outing. Teacher –led interventions.

Conduct people in and out of the texture, highlighting patterns that sound well together.

Help anyone who is struggling to stay in time and/or in meter by simplifying what they do.

Allow the students to hear the combinations, without saying anything at this stage.

Commentary on step 4:

Listen for good instrumental combinations, patterns that dovetail rhythmically, that are the same or contrast well.

Step 5: Evaluate as a class.

Which combinations of rhythms sounded best? What makes a good improvisation? How was it when everyone played together? Could you hear each person?

Commentary on step 5:

When everyone plays together there can be too many complex rhythms. Could learners double up on rhythms, play only the first (or second, last) part of their rhythm. Make sure the pulse is grounded, and everyone knows ACTIVITY where the 1st beat of the bar is.

Step 6: Refinement.

Refine riffs and texture and repeat. Address the problems highlighted in Step 5, and use the students' suggestions. You will probably have simpler riffs and fewer different patterns. Build up slowly this time, 1 person at a time (or group at a time).

Extension: Play for 3 bars then rest for a bar. Fill the "rest" bars with solos from individuals in the ensemble.

Commentary on step 6:

This refinement should make a more satisfying texture. If not, revisit step 5 again. If necessary, reduce complexity and introduce rules like "no triplets".

ACTIVITY TWO:

Introducing the atonal framework and source material.

Step 1: Questions for discussion – in pairs or as a class:

Where do you hear music in your everyday life? What is the music for in those situations – film, game, ringtone, party, home, school?

Why does it sometimes sound dissonant?

Commentary on step 1:

Introduce the idea of applied composition, and music that is composed eg for film to create drama. Provides a context and value for atonal melody.

Step 2: Listening

Listen to Thelonius Monk performing his piece *Blue Monk* (Youtube link opposite).

What do you notice about his performing style?

Monk was thought to be a musical “outsider” – is there anything in his music that makes him sound like an outsider?

Commentary step 2:

The purpose of this is to acquaint the students with the Monk source material through practical engagement as well as listening.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_40V2lcxM7k

Step 3: Playing

Preparation: on their own instruments or keyboards, students learn or revise the chromatic scale.

Learn the 1st 4 bars of the Blue Monk melody by ear, listening to the way chromatic notes are used to join minor 3rds. Play in unison – as an ensemble.

Extension: Learn the whole 12 bars by ear.

Commentary step 3:

There is some biographical information about Monk here:

www.monkzone.com/biography

ACTIVITY THREE:

Backbone Realisation.

Step 1 Hearing the backbone.

Give each person a copy of the score in the relevant key. Explain that this works like a map, showing you the bare bones of the piece. You or someone else may be playing what's written down. You can add your own part onto the score i.e. what you actually play (or notes, instructions etc). Play or have 1 person play the whole sheet, to give a musical overview.

Decide who will play section B – 1 pupil or a group of pupils eg all the wind instruments. Cycle this a few times so that everyone can hear the given material as a loop. Explain that you are going to add riffs to this loop, including bass lines, other riffs and beats, as you did in the percussion exercise.

Step 2 Adding riffs – harmonic context.

The riffs can be built from this mode: Eb E F# G A Bb. It may be helpful for students to play the mode over one or two octaves on their instruments, then take a minute to “noodle” – play around on the mode (discover its sonic properties).

Commentary step 1:

The piece represents Monk's moment of arrest, late one night. His life was about to turn upside down. Moments of confusion, the police chase, and Monk's own music all become mixed up and confused in his head.

Commentary step 2:

Backbone harmony suggests possibilities but doesn't limit them. You could be in E minor for this section!

Step 3 – modelling realisation – setting the groove.

Direct the group in a realisation of section B. Create a rhythm section, use the given line as a bass line or create an additional base line. A good root is E. Create a drum pattern.

Do you want your percussionists to think in quavers or semiquavers? Capture the urgency of the police chase using fast rhythms. Who in your rhythm section is best placed to do this?

Commentary step 3:

It's ok to direct this strongly – you are modelling the role of Ensemble Leader for later in the project.

A good chord for guitarists is Em, with or without an added 9th.

Step 4 – modelling realisation – adding parts.

Create a safe environment for people to add their own riffs. Ask people to choose 3 notes from the mode. Set up the groove and ask people to add their own parts, thinking rhythmically as they did in the percussion exercise.

Hear some of these – which ones engage with the groove? Which sound well together? Choose up to 3 to create an arrangement by having other students learn them – eg all the wind learn pattern 1, all the keyboards learn pattern 2, all the tuned percussion pattern 3.

Commentary step 4:

Similar rules apply to the earlier percussion exercise – not too much/too little going on, can you hear every instrument, are there riffs that compliment each other?

Step 5: creating an arrangement.

Hear the patterns in step 4 played by the groups of instruments you have chosen. Reflect: would any of the riffs sound better (more strident, dramatic, subtle) in a different octave? Try out changes. How do you want to build up the texture – all in together or one part at a time?

Choose a volunteer to become the MD and decide how to build up the arrangement. Write this as a list so that every one can see it. The MD should cue people in.

Step 6: Evaluate – refine.

Most arrangements will work – it's a matter of taste and commitment to the aim of creating drama. Evaluate by asking the MD for reflections first – support your MD, to encourage the group to feel safe when making creative decisions and leading the group. Address any issues such as ensemble balance, dynamics (create build-up), and articulation (are quavers even or swung, when do long notes finish, staccato or legato, etc). Play through again – you should have an even better riff section.

Commentary step 5:

Riffs could be doubled in two or more octaves – this makes them sound more solid (chunky).

Encourage your MD if needed by asking which instrument they would like to hear first ... then which next ...

Commentary step 6:

Does the build-up create drama and allow each part to be heard as it comes in (eg quiet instruments are best served coming in early whilst the texture is still light). Is it predictable or are there unexpected entries?

RESOURCES

Please see additional lesson resources (lead sheets).

Percussion instruments;

Pupils' own instruments;

Laptop/projector to show image.

Recording device and playback facility.

Extension: adding solo sections.

If you have keen improvisers in the class, you may wish to build in a solo section over this material. It may be helpful to pare down the texture to bass line, percussion and guitar or one accompanying instrument. Soloists may wish to use the mode in Step 2 as the basis of their solo, or play freely, or stick to E minor.

HOMEWORK:

Listen to the music of Thelonius Monk.

Find out about his life.

Research mathematical Magic Squares.