

**university musical society  
2000-2001 youth education**



**mingus big band**

**teacher resource guide**

**the university musical society's  
2000 - 2001 youth education program**

**mingus  
big band**

**youth performance  
tuesday, january 16, 2001  
hill auditorium, ann arbor**



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## Part I: About the Production

**“[Mingus Big Band] is digging into the repertoire of Charles Mingus, playing old and new arrangements that capture the best parts of the Mingus legacy.”**  
**- *The New York Times***



Burton Memorial Tower  
Home of the University Musical Society

## University Musical Society

The goal of the University Musical Society (UMS) is to engage, educate and serve Michigan audiences by bringing to our community an ongoing series of world-class artists who represent the diverse spectrum of today's vigorous and exciting live performing arts world.

Over its 122 years, strong leadership coupled with a devoted community have placed UMS in a league of internationally-recognized performing arts series. Today, the UMS seasonal program is a reflection of a thoughtful respect for this rich and varied history, balanced by a commitment to dynamic and creative visions of where the performing arts will take us into this new millennium. Every day UMS seeks to cultivate, nurture, and stimulate public interest and participation in every facet of the live performing arts.

Since that first season in 1880, UMS has expanded greatly and now presents the very best from the full spectrum of the performing arts: internationally renowned recitalists and orchestras, dance and chamber ensembles, jazz and world music performers, opera and theater. Through educational endeavors, commissioning of new works, youth programs, artists, residencies and other collaborative projects, UMS has maintained its reputation for quality, artistic distinction and innovation. The University Musical Society now hosts over 90 performances and more than 150 educational events each season. UMS has flourished with the support of a generous community that gathers in Hill and Rackham Auditoria, the Power Center, the Michigan Theater, St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church, the Museum of Art and the Lydia Mendelssohn Theatre.

While proudly affiliated with the University of Michigan, housed on the Ann Arbor campus, and a regular collaborator with many University units, the Musical Society is a separate not-for-profit organization that supports itself from ticket sales, corporate and individual contributions, foundation and government grants,

## How to Be a Good Audience Member

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Students attending the University Musical Society youth performances are expected to know how to be good audience members. Please take the time to educate and prepare your students for this live performance.

### Good audiences . . .

- Are good listeners.
- Keep their hands and feet to themselves.
- Do not talk or whisper during the performance.
- Laugh at the parts that are funny.
- Do not eat gum, candy, food, or drink in the theater.
- Stay in their seats during the performance.
- Clap after exciting music and solos



### Applause, Applause!!

As a general rule, each performance ends with applause from the audience. This is how the audience acknowledges the performers. Applause says, "Thank you! You're great!" Applause is a compliment defined by the loudness and duration of the clapping of hands. It is traditional to applaud at the end of each musical selection and sometimes after impressive solos. Group numbers are also rewarded with applause. If audience members really enjoy the performance, they may stand and clap in what is called a standing ovation.



### Drawings, Letters, and Reviews

After the performance, please conduct follow-up activities with your students. Help your students think about, discuss and internalize the production they've just seen. Please have the students make drawings or write thank you letters and reviews. These items will be shared with artists and the funders who make these performances possible. Encourage the students to be as imaginative and creative as possible. Send drawings, letters and reviews to: Youth Education Program, University Musical Society, Burton Memorial Tower, 881 N. University, Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1011.

## An Overview of Mingus Big Band

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**Charles Mingus**  
Charles Mingus (

charles mingus

mingus big band

jazz music

The featured vocalists for the youth performance are Kevin Mahogany and Frank Lacey.

The concert will include the following songs:

Baby Take a Chance with Me

Haitian Fight Song (from Blues and Politics)

Oh Lord, Don't Let Them Drop that Atomic Bomb on Me (from Blues and Politics)

Boogie Woogie Shuffle

Fables for Faubus

Cumbia (excerpt)

Each piece will be introduced from the stage.



Charles Mingus

One of the most important figures in twentieth century American music, Charles Mingus was a virtuoso bass player, accomplished pianist, bandleader and composer. Born on a military base in Nogales, Arizona, in 1922 and raised in Watts, California, his earliest musical influences came from the church -- choir and group singing -- and from "hearing Duke Ellington on the radio when [he] was eight years old." while absorbing music, first hand, from the great jazz masters first-hand. His early professional experience in the 40's found him touring with bands like Louis Armstrong, Kid Ory and Lionel Hampton.

Eventually, he settled in New York where he played and recorded with the leading musicians of the 1950's -- Charlie Parker, Miles Davis, Bud Powell, Art Tatum and Duke Ellington himself. One of the few bassists to do so, Mingus quickly developed as a leader of musicians. He was also an accomplished pianist. By the mid-50's, he had formed his own publishing and recording companies to protect and document his growing repertoire of original music. He also founded the "Jazz Workshop," a group which enabled young composers to have their new works performed in concert and on recordings.

Mingus soon found himself at the forefront of the avant-garde. His recordings bear witness to the extraordinarily creative body of work that followed. They include: *Pithecanthropus Erectus*, *The Clown*, *Tijuana Moods*, *Mingus Dynasty*, *Mingus Ah Um*, *The Black Saint and the Sinner Lady*, *Cumbia and Jazz Fusion*, and *Let My Children Hear Music*. He recorded over a hundred albums and wrote over three hundred scores.



Charles Mingus

Although he wrote his first concert piece, "Half-Mast Inhibition," when he was seventeen years old, it was not recorded until twenty years later by a 22-piece orchestra with Gunther Schuller conducting. The 1955 presentation of "Revelations", which combined jazz and classical idioms, that established him as one of the foremost jazz composers of his day.

In 1971, Mingus was awarded the Slee Chair of Music and spent a semester teaching composition at the State University of New York at Buffalo. In the same year, his autobiography, *Beneath the Underdog*, was published by Knopf. In 1972, it appeared in a Bantam paperback and was reissued after his death in 1980 by Viking Penguin and again by Pantheon Books in 1991. In 1972, he signed again with Columbia Records. His music was performed frequently by ballet companies, and Alvin Ailey choreographed an hour-long program called "The

He toured extensively throughout Europe, Japan, Canada, South America and the United States until the end of 1977, when he was diagnosed as having a rare nerve disease, Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis, also known as Lou Gehrig's disease. He was confined to a wheelchair, and although he was no longer able to write music on paper or compose at the piano, his last works were sung into a tape recorder.

From the 1960s until his death in 1979 at the age of 56, Mingus remained in the forefront of American music. When asked to comment on his accomplishments, Mingus said that his abilities as a bassist were the result of hard work but that his talent for composition came from God.

"I look forward to the day when we can transcend labels like jazz and acknowledge Charles Mingus as the major American composer that

-Steve Schlesinger, Guggenheim Foundation

Mingus received grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Smithsonian Institute, and the Guggenheim Foundation (two grants). He also received an honorary degree from Brandeis University and an award from Yale University. At a memorial following Mingus' death, Steve Schlesinger of the Guggenheim Foundation commented that Mingus was one of the few artists who received two grants and added, *The New Yorker* wrote, "For sheer melodic and rhythmic and structural originality, his compositions may equal anything written in Western music in the twentieth century."

He died in Mexico on January 5, 1979, and his ashes were scattered in the Ganges River in India. Both New York City and Washington DC honored him posthumously with a "Charles Mingus Day." After his death, the National Endowment for the Arts provided grants for a Mingus foundation called "Let My Children Hear Music," which catalogued all of Mingus' works. The microfilms of these works were then given to the Music Division of the New York Public Library, where they are currently available for study and scholarship. Repertory bands called the Mingus Dynasty and the Mingus Big Band continue to perform his music. Recent biographies of Charles Mingus include *Mingus* by Brian Priestly and *Mingus/Mingus* by Janet Coleman and Al Young.

Mingus' two hour, masterwork, "Epitaph," a composition which is more than 4000 measures long, was discovered during the cataloguing process. With the help of a grant from the Ford Foundation, the score and instrumental parts were copied and, the piece itself was premiered by a 30 piece orchestra, conducted by Gunther Schuller in a concert produced by Sue Mingus, Mingus' widow, at Alice Tully Hall on June 3, 1989, ten years after Mingus' death.

*The New Yorker* wrote that "Epitaph" represents the first advance in jazz composition since Duke Ellington's "Black, Brown, and Beige," which was written in 1943. *The New York Times* said it ranked with the "most memorable jazz events of the decade." Convinced that it would never be

## The Mingus Big Band

The Mingus Big Band (MBB) remains devoted to the vast repertoire that the late, great bassist and composer Charles Mingus left behind when he died in 1979. Organized and overseen by Sue Mingus (Mingus' widow), the Mingus Big Band consists of 14 players from a pool of over 100 of the best musicians on the jazz scene today. MBB plays special big band arrangements of Mingus, his frequent collaborator Sy Johnson, Steve Slagle, Ronnie Cuber and Jack Walrath. The Band has performed every Thursday night since 1991 to sold out houses at the Fez, below the Time Cafe in Manhattan's Greenwich Village.



The Mingus Big Band has played to great critical acclaim in many cities around the United States, including New York, Chicago, Boston, Washington, DC, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Atlanta, and Minneapolis. They have appeared at virtually every major jazz festival in Europe and at many of the major concert halls, including the Barbican in London and the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam. The Mingus Big Band has been featured on television in Japan, Germany, Brazil, Italy and in the U.S. on National Public Radio, live from both the Chicago and Detroit Jazz Festivals. In 1993, they performed in Washington, DC, at the Academy of Arts and Sciences to celebrate the acquisition of Mingus' music by the Library of Congress (the first African-American musician to achieve this). Both the *JazzTimes* and *Down Beat* critics and readers polls have voted the Mingus Big Band "Best Big Band" for several years running, and in June 1999, the *New York Jazz Awards* (sponsored by Bell Atlantic) awarded Mingus Big Band both the "Best Big Band" and "Best Touring Band" Awards.

The Mingus Big Band currently has five recordings out on the Dreyfus label. *Gunslinging Birds* was nominated for a 1996 Grammy for "Best Large Ensemble Jazz Recording" and won the 1996 NAIRD INDIE Award for "Best Mainstream Jazz Recording." *Live in Time* was released in January 1997 and was also nominated for a Grammy. The recently released *Blues and Politics* focuses on some of Mingus' more political pieces, as well as the blues at the heart of his music. This latest release lives up to the *JazzTimes* assertion that the Mingus Big Band is "the

## The Big Band Plays On: Sue Mingus, the Force Behind the Mingus Big Band

Sitting in her booth at The Fez, the night spot the Mingus Big Band fills to the gills every Thursday night, Sue Mingus grins devilishly at the stage-full of panicked musicians. She has just given them sheet music long enough to be the Dead Sea Scrolls and about two seconds to look it over before performing it.

This, says Sue, widow of the jazz bassist Charles Mingus and organizational leader of the big band that bears his name, is how her husband would have wanted it. she explains, white bobbed hair bouncing wildly around her sharp features. "Let the chips fall where they may."

When they do and the unrehearsed Mingus composition, "Cumbia in Jazz Fusion," grinds to a halt, Sue only grins more broadly. "That was a C+," she announces with satisfaction.

After Mingus died of Lou Gehrig's disease in 1979, Sue, who had known her husband for 11 years before marrying him in 1975, devoted herself to keeping his music alive and introducing it to a new generation of jazz enthusiasts and musicians.

And she certainly has an audience: More than 200 people regularly show up for the two sets at The Fez, the speak-easy-like club below the Time Cafe. A good number are musicians, and many are repeat customers, according to Josh Pickard, owner of Fez/Time that has hosted the band since its inception.

Pickard attributes their success to the caliber of the performers and to Sue's intensity. "It's her life," he says. "You couldn't have more commitment than she has."

For almost seven years now, the 14-piece Mingus Big Band has drawn crowds of 20-somethings, some of whom were heard discussing hip-hop as they waited to buy their Mingus tickets. "I'm not a jazz guy," said one recent devotee, "but it got to me. I'd definitely go back."

And even a few of the more than 100 musicians who rotate through the band didn't start out with much knowledge of Mingus' music. "Some of them were barely in diapers when Charles was playing," says Sue, pointing to the boyish faces of drummer Adam Cruz and visiting trombonist Jamal Haynes.

The diversity of players, which spans from such boy wonders to trombonist

"It's the risk, the surprise - that's what Charles' music was about."

-Sue Mingus  
Producer,  
Mingus Big Band



Mingus at Antibes CD cover



The musicians don't necessarily sound like Mingus which is fine with Sue as long as they are being appropriately innovative. She felt sure Charles would have approved of a Philip Harper trumpet solo adorned with bends and squeaks, for instance, even though it never would have been heard in Mingus' time. "The point is to keep the music moving forward," she says.

Though she has had some musical training and is as familiar with Mingus' work as a person can be, Sue considers her role in the band to be primarily spiritual and administrative. She looks for lost saxophone screws, gives feedback to the sound man, handles bookings, holds court with visiting jazz fans and dignitaries, arranges the lists and even chooses the order of soloists.

It's a position that doesn't always endear her to musicians, some of whom seem overwhelmed by her style. "I think I understand what Mingus was talking about when he wrote 'The Eye of Hurricane Sue,'" said one band member who wanted to remain nameless.

But Sue, who also does the hiring and firing for the band, shrugs off such criticism. "It's not about who's your best friend. You have to make decisions based on the music," she says.

Does such driving devotion to Mingus music make Sue miss her husband less? "I'm not a believer in missing what's already gone," she says. "Maybe if I weren't involved with music I would miss him, but there's no time."

Lerner, Sharon. "The Big Band Plays On." *New York Post*. Tuesday,

## ~~MBB- More Than a "Ghost Band"~~

While jazz may have been a soloist's music, big band jazz has always been symbolic, ensemble partnership of individual interpretation and written text. While the interpreters may be mortal and their improvisations ephemeral, the text is down in black and white, as permanent as an accent treasure map. It survives in perpetuity to tell the living where the dead buried their gold.

For those who have presided over the Mingus Big Band for the last five years the excavation is more cryptic. Mingus' music was an experiment in progress when he was alive. And those who play it today are caught up in its ambiguities, its openness and its challenges. Mingus' maps lead you only so far; then you proceed on your wits. We still refer to continuing a band after a leader's death rather condescendingly as "ghost" bands.

"Mingus expected musicians to find their own paths through his work."

-Andy McKee

Charles Mingus knew that his music would go on after his death. The only difference was, virtually nobody else did, perhaps not even his widow Sue Mingus. The Mingus Dynasty began more as an accident than a vision. In 1979 the bassist died, she organized the group to play a two-day tribute program at Carnegie Hall and used only four horns and a rhythm. "It sounded so authentic and full of spirit," she recalls, "we just kept it going."

Only when Mingus' once-lost masterpiece, *Epitaph*, was premiered 10 years later by Gunther Schuller did Sue Mingus first hear his music in the context of a large, 31-piece ensemble. "It was such an experience," she adds. "I realized that his music deserved to be heard this way with its dense harmonies and complex structures. It was the kind of band that Charles would have died to have had on a regular basis."

"A couple of the pieces we do were never performed," says McKee. "Certainly never recorded or even orchestrated. So the arrangements are done by guys in the band. This may mean adding introductions and embellishments. That spirit of improvisation and freedom is entirely characteristic of Mingus' method. This often will determine who will work out well in the band and who won't. A player may be a tremendous musician but needs more structure to frame his work. This band needs musicians who know how to frame themselves. That's my understanding of how Mingus' original groups worked."

"I was associated with Mingus in 1973," he says, "and it was always a workshop. That's when I found out how difficult it was to play his music. I have played in many big bands, but Mingus was different—the time changes, the rhythmic changes, the fact that we approached it as a workshop. If he heard something in you he liked he expected you to bring it to the table every night. When I was playing alto with him, he once told

"He wanted me to play like me."

-John Stubblefield,  
saxophonist

me that he had played with Charlie Parker and that he didn't want me to be another Parker. He was the most honest bandleader I ever worked with in that respect. He expected you to be yourself and exemplify your best at all times. If you didn't or you tried to fake with him, that's when there'd be an explosion. We try to keep individuality alive today."

"The interesting thing," says Sue Mingus, "was that Charles always knew that he was primarily a composer. But the world did not perceive that because he was such a powerful figure on stage and his music was so identified with his personality. No one wanted to trespass into his territory. His music wasn't like Duke Ellington, and the Library of Congress has acquired all his compositions and papers. Charles is coming into his own gradually in a way that he was not understood in his lifetime. In the beginning, people thought it was impossible to have a Mingus band without Mingus. But I simply took my cue from Charles, because he always considered himself first and foremost a composer."

Could Mingus imagine his music without him? You bet he could. "He believed in reincarnation," says Sue Mingus. "Before he died, he sat in his wheelchair and told a friend that he would probably be reincarnated as an unknown cello player playing Bach, Beethoven, and Mingus."

For the last five years, on the basis of an initial one-month contract, a full Mingus band of 14 pieces has played his music every Thursday night in the basement of New York's Time Cafe at 380 Lafayette Street, around the corner from a much-frequented Tower Record store on Broadway. MBB did not become a road band until the summer of 1994, when it did the European festival circuit. Similar tours followed. To expand touring opportunities, Mingus has turned to the classically oriented Herbert Barrett Agency, a first in the band's short history.

"We have a number of musical directors," says Sue Mingus. The reason we have it that way is because musicians are in and out of the named, and we would be out of luck if someone had to tour on his own for three weeks. None of this has happened according to any long range design. It has been very organic." The pool of directors includes McKee, Lacy, and Steve Slagle. But then maybe the real music director is Sue Mingus herself, who came from a musical family, played piano in her teens and studied composition. Although she knew little about jazz until she met her husband, her credentials have enabled her to fashion a creative role for herself in the band that goes way beyond anyone's expectations. "I have a loud mouth," she admits with a smile in a soft voice. "I choose the directors, commission the arrangements and watch over everyone's shoulder. We are trying to keep it as full of risk as we can."

To paraphrase a Louis Armstrong song from the 1936 movie *Pennies From*

## The Blues

The blues can be found in all periods and styles of jazz. It's the foundation of the music. The blues is defined as many things -- a type of music, a harmonic language, an attitude towards playing, a collection of sounds -- but mostly the blues is a feeling. It is happy, sad, and everything in between, but its intention is always to make you feel better, not worse; to cheer you up, not bring you down.

The blues was born out of the religious, work, and social music of Southern black people during the late 1800s. It is the foundation for many kinds of music -- R & B, rock 'n' roll, and jazz. It's fair to call the 20th century in American music the "Blues Period."

In its most common form, the blues consist of a 12, 8, or 4 bar pattern. The first line is played and then repeated, and the third line is a rhyming line. It usually follows the harmonic progression of the I, IV and V chords, although there are a number of variations. The blues can be sung (some of the best blueses feature very poetic lyrics), played by a solo instrument, or played by an ensemble.

One important aspect of the blues is the pattern of call-and-response. Rooted in traditional African music, call-and-response manifested in the U.S. in the form of Negro work and church songs. In these styles, the leader of the work gang or church congregation sang the call, while the remaining members responded. In a blues tune, call-and-response becomes the dialogue between instruments or between instrumentalists and vocalists.

A second important device used in the blues is the musical "break." A break is a cessation or disruption of the established rhythm or tune. During the break a soloist may provide a musical statement known as a "fill." The fill serves the purpose of bringing the band to a new chorus or part of the song.

Third, band members may imitate vocal lines and/or intonations with their instruments. Vocal sliding and slurring are turned into the bent and blue notes typical of blues guitar and wind and brass instruments, while the trumpet and trombone mimic vocal timbre and rasp, many times by the use of mutes.

Most importantly, the blues is an art form and as such is both a reflection and a propeller of life. In playing the blues, musicians convey both what is seen and heard around them as well as what they feel. Within this creative process, the artist is reaching beyond the moment, challenging himself, his fellow band members, and his listeners to move with him, into the next bar of music, the next solo, or the next song, but always into something new. This is the real lifeline of the blues and jazz traditions that allows them to constantly change and evolve.

By the turn of the century, New Orleans musicians began to blend the blues with the other kinds of music they heard all around them --

## Swing

Swing is the basic rhythmic attitude of jazz and is so important to the music that if a band can't swing, then it can't play jazz well. In the words of the great Duke Ellington, "It don't mean a thing if it ain't got that swing." Swing depends on how well coordinated or "in sync" the players are and the style and energy with which they play. It propels the rhythm forward in a dynamic, finger snapping way. However, rhythm alone does not produce swing. It also involves timbre, attack, vibrato, and intonation, which all combine to produce swing. Additionally, swing is the name of a jazz style that evolved in the 1930s, characterized by large ensembles playing complex arrangements to which people danced.

## Improvisation

Improvisation is the spontaneous creation of music as it is performed. When a musician improvises, he or she invents music at the moment of performance, building on the existing theme of the music. Jazz generally consists of a combination of predetermined and improvised elements, though the proportions of one to the other may differ. Sometimes improvisation is described in terms of its role within a band. Generally, the ensemble plays a chorus or succession of choruses during which an individual player improvises on the harmonies of the theme. In collective improvisation, however, the members of a group participate in simultaneous improvisations of equal or comparable importance. This builds a relationship between the members of the ensemble, helping them to "talk" to and challenge each other. It also allows a musician to be creative and show his or her personality. Through experimenting and developing personal styles of improvisation, musicians are able to challenge and redefine conventional standards of virtuosity.

## Melody

Jazz melodies are primarily rooted in the blues tradition. The blues scale is derived from the pentatonic (a five note) scale. Compared to the European scale (collections of seven notes known as diatonic scale in which each note has a specific relationship to the others to create a major or minor scale), the blues scale uses blue notes. Blue notes are flattened notes, generally a half step away from the obvious major scale note. Blue notes and bent notes, which the musician creates by varying the pitch, give jazz and blues melodies their unique color.

## Harmony

Harmony is created through playing certain notes within a chord that compliment the melody. Harmonic progressions in jazz move in a parallel motion with the melody. Structurally, the 7th chord is the fundamental harmonic unit. Its resolution is delayed until there is a

## Texture

The importance of texture in jazz reflects a central principle of the jazz tradition: the style of playing can be just as important as the notes that are played. As a musical concept, texture can mean a number of things. It can refer to the instrumentation or voicings of harmonies or to the timbre -- the tone color produced by instruments. The latter is the most distinguishing texture in jazz. In European music, timbre generally stresses an even tone, a clear and "pure" pitch. In the blues tradition, instruments can use this sound but may choose to compromise the steadiness of timbre in favor of other effects such as the imitation of the human voice. This accounts for the scoops, bends, growls, and wails heard in many jazz and blues melodies. Each jazz musician has his or her own timbral effects, and listeners can recognize various players by their individual sounds.

## Rhythm

The way musicians accent a beat and its subdivisions creates the rhythmic nuances that give jazz its character. In some musical styles, the beat is subdivided into two equal parts. But in jazz, the beat is divided in a lilting fashion that implies three, rather than two subunits. Much of the vitality in jazz lies in the irregularity of its rhythm and the deliberate displacement of the expected accents known as syncopation. Fundamental to jazz rhythms, syncopation involves the shifting of accents from stronger beats to weaker ones.

## Instruments

A jazz band can consist of any combination of musicians. One person can play jazz and play it beautifully. Most often, however, a jazz band consists of a rhythm section and one or more horns. The band can be small, such as a trio, or large, like a big band with as many as 18 people.

Big bands are made up of three sections: woodwind, brass, and rhythm. Woodwind sections usually have several saxophones, a clarinet, and sometimes a flute; brass sections have trumpets, trombones, and sometimes a tuba. The rhythm section almost always has a piano, double bass, and drums and sometimes includes guitar, banjo, vibraphone, or other percussion instruments. Sometimes a vocalist accompanies a band, filling the same role (or adding to it) as the brass or woodwind sections. A jazz

# Glossary of Jazz Terms

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AABA form -- \*\*\*\*

Arrangement – The orchestration of a musical work; i.e., choosing which instruments play at what time and where improvisation can be.

Bebop – A jazz style developed during the late 1930s and early 1940s, characterized by very fast tempos, complex melodies, and unusual chords. Bebop, which emphasized the inventiveness of soloists, is usually played in small groups.

Blues – A non-religious folk music that rose among African-Americans during the late 19th century and features several African influences: a call-and-response pattern, blue notes, and imitation of the human voice by musical instruments. Classic blues have a twelve-measure, three-line form, with the second line repeating the first.

Blues note -- any note that is bent or smeared, generally a half step away from the obvious note.

Blues scale -- \*\*\*

Call-and-Response -- A musical "conversation" when players answer one another; exchanges between instrumentalists.

Chord – A combination of usually three or more notes sounded/played simultaneously or one after another.

Cool Jazz – A jazz style that developed during the late 1940s and throughout the 1950s in reaction to bebop. Cool jazz has a clean sound, complex textures, and a deliberate tone, often with a slight lagging behind the beat.

Creole – A person born in Louisiana of French and African, and sometimes Spanish ancestry. Black Creoles were often of lighter skin and sometimes considered themselves to be of a higher social class before other blacks; before the Civil War, they were more likely to be free citizens than slaves.

Diatonic Scale -- \*\*\*\*\*

"Ghost Band" -- \*\*\*\*

Gig – A job, usually a paid one, to play music.

Harmony – The relation of the notes in a musical piece, or the playing of two or more notes at the same time. The patterns formed by the notes create the key that the piece is in and, with rhythm, give it expressiveness and momentum.

Improvisation – Music played without written notation; an “instant composition” that is central to jazz.

Jam Session – An informal gathering of musicians improvising and playing on their own time, usually after hours.

Key – The principal scale of a piece, in which many or most of its notes are played.

Melody – A succession of notes that together form a complete musical statement; a tune.

Meter – The basic succession of beats in a musical piece, the framework against which the rhythm is played.

Pitch – A note or musical tone.

Ragtime – An enormously popular musical style of the late 19th and early 20th century, consisting of a syncopated melody over a regularly accented beat.

Riff – A repeated brief musical phrase used as background for a soloist or to add drama to a musical climax.

Scat Singing – A singing style, usually improvised, that uses nonsense syllables for the words of a song, often with the goal of sounding like a musical instrument.

Seventh Chord – A four-note chord that includes a triad and a note a seventh above the tonic. In jazz, the three most common seventh chords are the major seventh (e.g., C E G B), minor seventh (e.g., C E-flat G B-flat), and dominant seventh (e.g., C E G B-flat).

Soloist -- \*\*\*\*

Standard Song Form – A 32-bar form first popularized in the twenties and thirties by the composers of popular songs; along with the blues form, this AABA form (A represents a 32-bar musical pattern, and B is a different 32-bar musical pattern) is a standard one for many jazz compositions.

Swing – The commercial dance music associated with the 1930s and early 1940s and played by the big bands; also, the element in jazz that defines it and separates it from classical music. A style of playing in which the rhythm is as important as the notes played, and in which the beats that are normally unaccented in classical music are given equal importance to the accented beats.

Syncopation – The shifting of a regular musical beat to place emphasis on a normally unaccented beat.

Tempo -- \*\*\*

Texture – The instrumentation of a musical passage or the sound and qualities of an instrument or voice.

Twelve-Bar Blues -- \*\*\*

Sources: What is Jazz? Jazz Education Guide. New York: Jazz at Lincoln Center, 2000.

# History of Jazz

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## Background

Jazz is a form of American music. It is a mingling of the musical expressions of all the people who came to the United States, by choice or by force -- people from Africa, Europe, Latin America -- as well as the people who were already living in the U.S. Jazz is particularly American because it was created on U.S. soil (specifically New Orleans), from which all its cultural roots come.

By the early 20th century, the U.S. already had its own special blend of musical traditions. Hymns, work songs, field hollers, chants, classical music, Negro spirituals, gospel songs, the blues and ragtime were some of the types of music that Americans created for religious, work and social purposes. Jazz incorporated all of these styles.

Jazz quickly spread and established itself as a part of American culture in the 1910s and 1920s; in fact, the 1920s are often referred to as the "Jazz Age." It was during this time that new channels by which jazz could be heard spread rapidly: the phonograph, the radio and the talking motion picture made it possible for millions to hear jazz.

It was also at this time that a great number of Black Americans migrated north in search of better jobs and a way of life. Jazz went with them everywhere, but it was centered in four cities -- New Orleans, Chicago, Kansas City and New York.

## New Orleans

New Orleans has the distinction of being the birthplace of jazz; it was there that the transition from the blues to jazz took place. In a city made up of Blacks, Whites, Creoles and other peoples with their own musical traditions, and with military brass bands present at every social, political or sporting event, it is no wonder that jazz was influenced by so many musical traditions.

Called "jazz" at first, this music clearly had a unique sound. The polyphonic structure of New Orleans jazz consisted of three separate and distinct melodic strands -- the cornet, clarinet and trombone -- played together with great artistry. The cornet usually led the way, playing the basic melodic line and emphasizing the strong beats. The trombone supported the cornet, accenting the rhythm with huffs and puffs and filling out the bottom of the design with low smears and growls. The clarinet took the part of the supporting voice and provided rich embellishment. When these instruments improvised together (called collective improvisation), they sounded something like a church congregation singing a spiritual: the cornet was the song leader, and the trombone and clarinet wove their

Since many New Orleans musicians didn't read music, they played from memory and improvised, which gave new rhythms and flourishes to written marches, society songs and ragtime pieces. They naturally turned to the blues and older traditions of folk singing to create their new music.

## Chicago

When Blacks migrated to northern cities in the 1920s, they brought blues, stomps and catchy dance tunes with them. Several key musicians like King Oliver, Jelly Roll Morton and Louis Armstrong moved from New Orleans to Chicago where an audience for jazz developed. Since Chicago was the biggest railroad center in the world, its industries drew black workers from throughout the South, and the city soon became the center of jazz activity.

## Kansas City

During the 1920s in Kansas City and the Southwest, a new style of jazz was also forming and flourishing whose roots were in orchestral ragtime and rural blues. Here an emphasis was placed on the use of saxophones, the walking bass and the hi-hat cymbal, which added the characteristic rhythmic swing. Perhaps most importantly, the players memorized relatively simple melodies to give the soloists freedom to concentrate on rhythmic drive. Bennie Moten, William "Count" Basie, and other band leaders advanced this style of jazz which became known as "Kansas City 4/4 Swing." This sound is distinctive due to its rhythm and shout style vocals -- four solid beats to the bar stomped by a rugged rhythm section and accompanied by a singer, shouting the blues away.

## New York

When jazz musicians began to congregate in Harlem in the 1920s, it was home to a host of great ragtime pianists who had developed a style called stride. The school of stride piano, founded by James P. Johnson, features the left hand pounding out powerful single bass notes alternating with mid-range chords. This way of playing freed jazz rhythmically by allowing the left hand to jump in wide arcs up and down the bass end of the piano.

Fletcher Henderson and Don Redman also introduced a new style of jazz orchestration. They led a nine-piece band and treated the sections of this relatively large ensemble as individual instruments of a smaller group. Henderson used brass and reed sections as separate voices, pitting them against each other in call-and-response form. He left room for improvisation in solo passages against the arranged background.

## The "Swing" Era

a new look and a new name. Swing music differed from earlier jazz styles because the size of the band had grown from around five musicians to more than twelve. The big band consisted of three sections: reed instruments, brass instruments and rhythm instruments. The brass and reed sections used call-and-response patterns, answering each other with riffs -- repeated phrases that they threw back and forth. All of it was tinged with a blues tonality.

Swing became commercialized as the music was spread by the many dance bands, the popularity of live radio broadcasts and the expansion of the recording industry. One of the most prolific and important composers in the Swing Era and throughout the 20th century was Edward Kennedy "Duke" Ellington.

### **Bebop and Latin**

The next major break in jazz styles occurred in New York in the mid-1940s among a group of musicians meeting in after-hours jam sessions. These players felt they had outgrown swing and big band arrangements and were frustrated by the lack of opportunity to experiment and "stretch out." They began changing the music: harmonies became more complex, tempos were accelerated, melodies were often difficult to hum or whistle, chords and scales sounded strange on first hearing and rhythms were juggled in a complicated.

This new style of jazz was called bebop, or bop. Its pioneers were trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie and saxophonist Charlie Parker. Thelonious Monk, a composer and pianist, was also very influential due to his unique sense of rhythm, time and chord structures. Although bop was largely improvised, a bop number customarily began and ended with a written-down or memorized chorus played in unison. Between these two choruses, each member of the group took a turn soloing. These solos are what distinguished the musicians and their sense of jazz music; they required a musicality that went beyond the training and technique of the average jazz musician.

Latin Jazz also boomed during the 1940s. Latin music has influenced jazz since its earliest days: the Creole music of New Orleans used a rumba rhythm, and Jelly Roll Morton used what he called a "Spanish Tinge" in his music. However, Latin music made an indelible mark on jazz orchestras and small bop groups of the 1940s. In the early 1940s, the band leader Machito formed a group called the Afro-Cubans, and in the late 1940s, Dizzy Gillespie established his own Afro-Cuban jazz orchestra. Chico O'Farrill, Mario Bauzá, Ray Baretto, Tito Puente and other Latin jazz masters leave a rich legacy as well.

### **New Styles**

By the 1950s, new styles began to emerge from the bebop scene. Cool jazz was characterized by slower tempos and a more relaxed feel and was quickly adopted by many West Coast musicians. Modal jazz, featuring compositions using modal scales (arrangements of scales basic to early Western music), also became popular. In this style, melodies were constructed with a collection of notes, none of which could be defined as a harmonic center. Other styles, such as hard bop (which combined bebop with traces of gospel music and the blues), third stream (which synthesized basic elements of jazz with those of Western fine art music) and avant-garde (less structured and highly improvised music with unusual instrumentation), also began during the 1950s.

### **Jazz Today**

Jazz continues to thrive and now surfaces across the spectrum from pop to fusion to straight-ahead jazz ensembles. It continues to evolve through jazz musicians' exploration of the music's roots and past masters and their own rethinking and reinterpreting of jazz styles.

lowed for longer and sometimes more intricate melodies and more flexibility in writing harmonic changes, thereby giving soloists a variety of improvisational opportunities.

By the thirties jazz, or swing, had become America's popular music. Swing bands were in demand across the country and abroad. Duke Ellington's Orchestra and Count Basie's Orchestra were both heard on radio broadcasts throughout the thirties. Dance halls were filled with popular songs as performed by big bands and orchestras, which took frequent tours across the country. Swing music took jazz from its settings in the clubs of Storyville, Kansas City, Chicago, or New York City and introduced it to cities all across the U.S. Some of the most popular and enduring pieces from this period included *Take the "A" Train*, *One o'Clock Jump*, and *Flying Home*.

### **The Forties, Fifties, and Beyond**

The next major break in jazz styles occurred in the mid-forties in New York with a group of musicians meeting in after-hours jam sessions. Frustrated by the commercialization of jazz, these players created a music that was meant to challenge themselves as opposed to entertaining an audience. Harmonies became more complex, tempos were accelerated, and more difficult melodies were written to replace the melodies of popular tunes. Describing the way these faster melodies sounded, trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie (1917-93) coined the term "bebop" to identify this new music. Gillespie, along with Charlie "Bird" Parker (1920-55), Kenny Clark (1914-1982), Max Roach (1924- ), Bud Powell (1924-1966), and Thelonious Monk (1917-82), were the major innovators of this musical and cultural movement.

Latin jazz entered the mainstream of American music in the forties, characterized by its prominent Latin American dance rhythms. In the early forties Machito formed the Afro-Cubans, and in the late forties, Dizzy Gillespie established his own Afro-Cuban jazz orchestra; and musicians like Tito Puente, Chico O'Farill and Maurio Bauza made an indelible print on jazz played in orchestras and in small bop groups.

It is important to note that at the same time, Duke Ellington continued developing his compositional style, exploring extended compositions while touring both in the U.S. and abroad. It was during the forties, fifties and sixties that Ellington wrote his large-scale suites, sacred concerts, and first full-length film score (for "Anatomy of a Murder"), and inaugurated a series of annual concerts at Carnegie Hall.

## **Part II: Lesson Plans and Activities**



**“Of all the repertory big bands and orchestras, this one seems to have the most fun.”**  
**JazzTimes, May 1997**

## Lesson Plans

The following curriculum offers suggestions intended to be used in preparation for attending a performance of the Mingus Big Band. Teachers may pick and choose from the cross-disciplinary activities and can coordinate with other subject area teachers. The lesson plans are meant as aids or guidelines for creating specific lesson plans. You may wish to use several activities, a single plan, or pursue a single activity in greater depth, depending on your subject area, the skill level or maturity of your students, and your intended learner outcomes.

### Learner Outcomes

- Each student will develop a feeling of self-worth, pride in work, respect, appreciation and understanding of other people and cultures, and a desire for learning now and in the future in a multicultural, gender-fair, and ability-sensitive environment.
- Each student will develop appropriately to that individual's potential, skill in reading, writing, mathematics, speaking, listening, problem solving, and examining and utilizing information using multicultural, gender-fair and ability-sensitive materials.
- Each student will become literate through the acquisition and use of knowledge appropriate to that individual's potential, through a comprehensive, coordinated curriculum, including computer literacy in a multicultural, gender-fair, and ability-sensitive environment.



## State of Michigan Selected Content Standards and Benchmarks Making Meaningful Connections with Mingus Big Band

### English Language Arts

#### **Standard 3: Meaning and Communication**

**All students will focus on meaning and communications as they listen, speak, view, read, and write in personal, social, occupational, and civic contexts.**

Early Elementary: Explore the relationships among various components of the communication process such as sender, message, and receiver.

Later Elementary: Analyze the impact of variables on components of the communication process.

Middle School: Begin to implement strategies to regulate effects of variables of the communication process.

High School: Consistently use strategies to regulate the effects of variables on the communication process.

#### **Standard 5: Literature**

**All students will read and analyze a wide variety of classic and contemporary literature and other texts to seek information, ideas, enjoyment, and understanding of their individuality, our common heritage and common humanity, and the rich diversity of our society.**

Early Elementary: Describe and discuss the similarities of plot and character in literature and other texts from around the world.

Later Elementary: Describe and discuss the shared human experiences depicted in literature and other texts from around the world. Examples include birth, death, heroism, and love.

Middle School: Identify and discuss how the tensions among characters, communities, themes, and issues and literature and other texts are related to one's own experience.

High School: Describe and discuss archetypal human experiences that appear in literature and other texts from around the world.

### Social Studies

#### **Standard I-3: Analyzing and Interpreting the Past**

**All students will reconstruct the past by comparing interpretations written by others from a variety of perspectives and creating narratives from evidence.**

Early Elementary: Use a variety of records to construct a narrative about their personal or family histories.

Later Elementary: Use primary sources to reconstruct past events in their local community.

Middle School: Analyze interpretations of major events selected from African, Asia, Canadian, European, and Latin American history to reveal perspectives of the authors.

High School: Challenge arguments of historic inevitability by formulating examples of how different choices could lead to different consequences.

**Standard I-4: Judging Decisions from the Past**  
**All students will evaluate key decisions made at critical turning points in history by assessing their implications and long-term consequences.**

Early Elementary: Recall situations in their lives that required decisions and evaluate the decisions made in light of their consequences.

Later Elementary: Select decisions made to solve past problems and evaluate those decisions in terms of ethical consideration, the interests of those affected by the decisions, and a short- and long-term consequences in those directions.

Middle School: Identify the response of individuals to historic violations of human dignity involving discrimination, persecution, and crimes against humanity.

High School: Evaluate the responses of individuals to historic violations of human dignity involving discrimination, persecution, and crimes against humanity.

**Mathematics**

**Standard II-1: Shape and Shape Relationships**  
**Students develop spatial sense, use shape as an analytic and descriptive tool, identify characteristics and define shapes, identify properties and describe relationship among shapes.**

Elementary: Explore ways to combine, dissect and transform shapes.

Middle School: Generalize about the common properties of similar, congruent, parallel and perpendicular shapes and verify their generalizations informally.

High School: Compare and analyze shapes and formally establish the relationships among them, including congruence, similarity, parallelism, perpendicularity and incidence.

**Standard II-2: Position**  
**Students identify locations of objects, identify location relative to other objects, and describe the effects of transformations (e.g., sliding, flipping, turning, enlarging, reducing) on an object.**

Elementary: Locate and describe objects in terms of orientation, direction and relative position, including up, down, front, back, N-S-E-W, flipped, turned, translated; recognize symmetrical objects and identify their lines of symmetry.

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perpendicular; differentiate between fixed (e.g., N-S-E-W) and relative (e.g., right-left) orientations, recognize and describe examples of bilateral and rotational symmetry.

High School: Locate and describe objects in terms of their orientation and relative position, including displacement (vectors), phase maxima, minima, and inflection points; give precise descriptions of symmetries.

**Science**

**Standard IV-4: Waves and Vibrations**  
**All students will describe sounds and sound waves; explain shadows, color, and other light phenomena; measure and describe vibrations and how waves transfer energy.**

Elementary: Explain how sounds are made

Middle School: Explain how sound travels through different media.

High School: Relate characteristics of sounds that we hear to properties of sound waves.

sure and  
 vibrations transfer

# Lesson #1: Instruments in Conversation

What does it mean to be a good listener?

**Objectives:**

Students will understand the conversational nature of jazz and be able to describe how call and response, improvisation, and the sounds of different instruments contribute to the musical conversation.

**Materials:**

Tape player  
Audio tape

**Classroom Instructions:**

1. Engage the class in a conversation by asking what things excite them. Let the class direct this conversation, with as many people as possible contributing. After several minutes, ask the students what different members of the class said.
2. If the students can repeat what was said, ask them why they can tell you this (they were listening and paying attention to others).
3. If students cannot tell you what was said, ask them why (they were not listening) and try it again.
4. Point out that a conversation can only happen when people listen to what was said and then respond to it.
5. What else, besides words, helped you to understand the conversation (tone, level, speed of voice, movements, gestures etc.)?
6. Try the same procedure but ask the students to talk about things that make them sad. (They will still have to listen, but how do their voices and body movements change?)
7. Ask the following questions (later these same questions can be used to introduce the element of improvisation in jazz).
  - Did you always know that you were going to say before you said it?
  - Did you get any ideas from what someone else said?
  - Will we ever have this same exact conversation again?
  - Did the conversation focus on a topic, even though we both did not know what we were going to say?
8. Tell the students that you want them to keep in mind what we just said about conversation while they are listening to the tape.

9. Ask the following:

- Did you just hear a conversation? Why or why not?
- Was anyone talking?
- Do we always need words to communicate?
- Who was holding this conversation?
- Did you feel like the musicians were speaking and listening to each other with their instruments?
- Did the musicians have to play their instruments one at a time to be heard?
- How did this music make you feel?
- What did it make you think about?
- What do you think it was about? Use your imagination. What about the piece made you think this? Sounds of instruments, number of instruments, tempo? Play the tape again, asking the class to listen for something they missed the first time that they would like to share with the class.
  - Ask the class if they know what kind of music they are listening to.
  - Point out the conversation between the instruments is an important feature of almost all jazz styles. One instrument “calls” out to another and then the other “responds” (also known as call and response).
  - Also let the students know that in jazz the “topic” of the conversation is the song, but that — just as the students in conversation did not know exactly what they would say beforehand – jazz musicians don’t know the exact notes they will be playing or how they will be playing them until the moment it happens. This is known as improvisation, another important feature of jazz.

## Lesson #2: Percussion

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### Objective

Using daily or household objects, students will create their own rhythms.

### Materials

For drums and shakers:

empty oatmeal boxes, empty and cleaned tin cans, plastic soda bottles, and plastic tubs with tops. For shaker sounds: rice, beans, plastic beads

### For mallets:

unsharpened pencils with erasers, chopsticks wrapped at the end with large rubber bands.

### For wood blocks:

blocks of wood measuring about 6"x4" and 1"-2" thick which have been sanded to eliminate sharp edges and splinters or sanded wooden dowels cut to 8 - 10" lengths  
-Additional materials: electrical tape

### Classroom Instructions:

1. Ask the students to think of a special rhythm that can go along with their name. Allow the students to experiment on their own for a few minutes.
2. Divide the class into small groups. Each student should teach their rhythm to the group. This can be done in a call-and-response method: the student plays their rhythm, and the rest of the group plays the rhythm back.
3. You can vary this activity by next having the students march around the room, or in place, while playing their rhythms. Trying to keep steady time between the marching and the playing of the rhythm.

## Lesson #3: Letter Writing

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### Objective:

Students will apply the jazz history material they have learned in a situation that will foster their writing and critical thinking skills.

### Materials:

List of jazz musicians, from below

Website reference list, from back of the study guide or your pre-screened web-sites



Ella Fitzgerald

### Classroom Instructions:

1. Start a discussion with the class about the music they listen to today.  
What types of music do you listen to? Different styles?  
Where do you hear it? At stores, in the car, dances?  
How do you listen to music? (CD players, radios, MP3's, live performances)
2. "What types of music did your grandparents listen to? Did they have radios, CD players, tape decks, record players? Could they listen to music in the car, at the store, at dances?"
3. Put the students into pairs  
one student in the pair is #1 and the other is #2
4. Each student will pick a prominent jazz musician from the list below.  
Louis Armstrong  
Miles Davis  
Duke Ellington  
Ella Fitzgerald  
Dizzy Gillespie  
Billie Holiday  
Charles Mingus  
Charlie Parker
5. Have each student write a letter, in their own voice to their partner's chosen musician. Each student will tell about the music they listen to today, how they listen to it, where they listen to it, etc.
6. Have the students trade letters.
7. Now each student will be the jazz musician and respond to their partner's letter. This letter could include similar topics, like what type of music they play, do they record CD's, do they play for the radio, do they play live concerts? Use the internet to help find any sources.
8. By the end of this lesson each student should have written two

## Lesson #4: Mingus Big Band Style vs. Standard Big Band Style

### Objective:

Students will be able to identify the similarities and differences between the Mingus Big Band style and standard big band style.

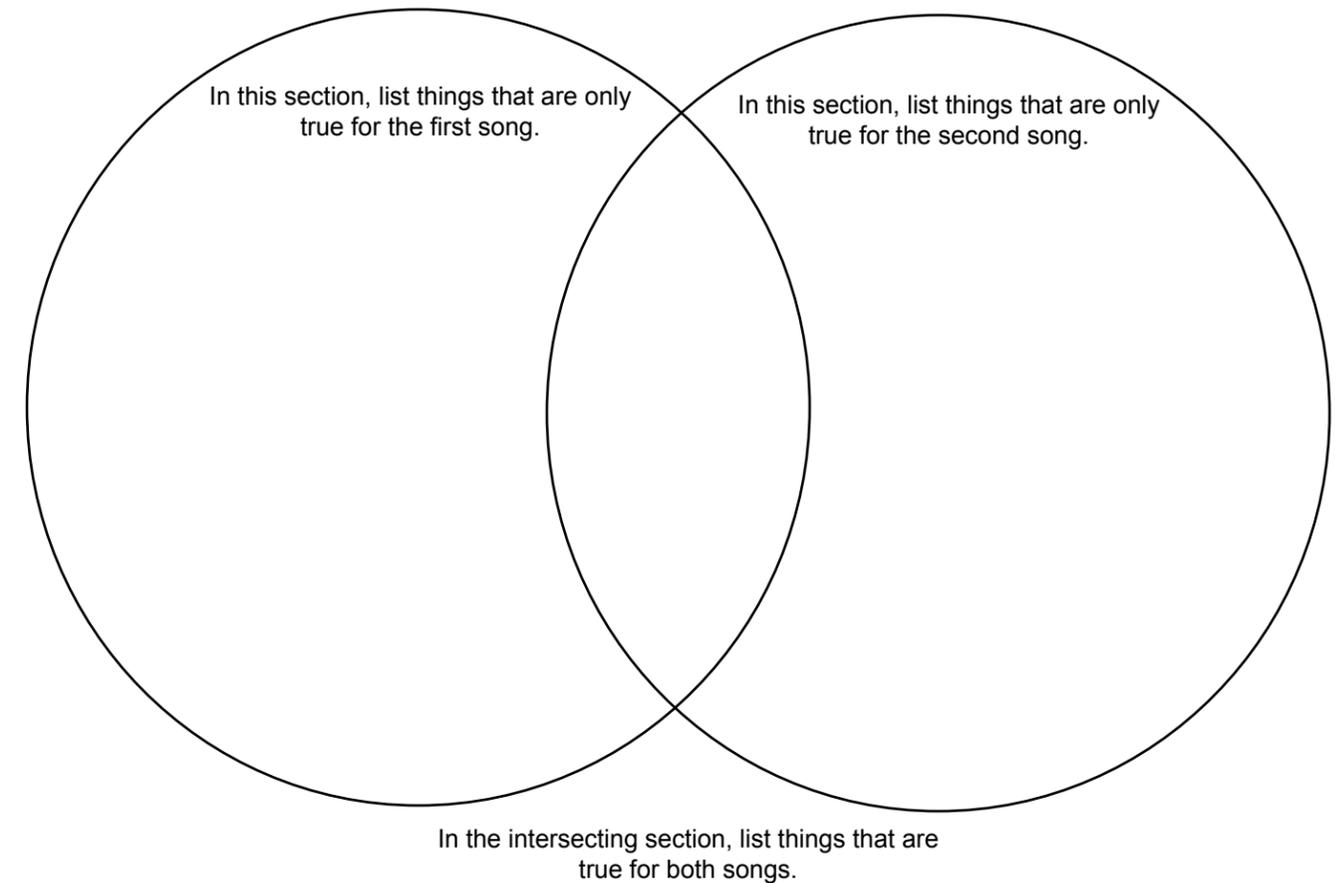
### Materials:

audio tape  
 stereo system  
 a good pair of ears  
 Two copies per student of Venn diagram handout from next page (optional)

### Classroom Instructions:

1. Talk about listening to music and the different sounds, rhythms, textures, instruments, and moods that can be listened for. Refer to the definitions earlier in the guide.
2. Play the first song on the audio tape, "Haitian Fight Song." (This is one of the songs that will be heard at the youth performance.) Ask students to make notes about interesting things they hear.
3. Play "Giant Steps," the second song, and have students do the same.
4. Compare and contrast the two songs with the class. If you like, have students mark them on the Venn Diagram on the next page. The following questions may be helpful:
  - How are these two bands similar?
  - What makes them sound different?
  - Do you think they have different sounds?
  - Does one group play more together as an ensemble?
  - Do the sounds of both groups sounds alike? Is one darker or brighter than the other?
  - Do you think that one of that bands sounds more like dance music?
5. Without telling the students the name of the group performing the next song, play the third song on the tape, "Pussycat Dues" by Charles Mingus. Again, have students write down anything that they think is interesting.
6. Next, play "In the Mood," the fourth song on the tape. Have students write and reflect on what they are hearing.
7. Ask the students if they can tell which song is the Mingus Big Band and which song is by the Carnegie Hall Big Band. How did they come to these conclusions?

## Listening Activity: Compare and Contrast



## Lesson #5: Civil Rights Interviews

### Objective:

For students to gain insight into the struggles of racial minorities because of segregation and prejudice.

### Materials:

Copies of *Oh, Freedom!* interview from following pages  
Highlighters or markers

### Classroom Instructions:

1. Charles Mingus was not only a composer and musician. He had strong feelings about the Civil Rights Movement as well. As he traveled in the 1960s and 1970s, he witnessed many acts of discrimination and unfairness. Some of his political ideas were worked into his songs. For example, "Fables for Faubus," which you will hear at the youth performance, was his angry response to Arkansas Governor Orval Faubus and his decision to close down the schools in Little Rock instead of integrating them. Mingus was not the only Black entertainer who faced this discrimination. In the following interview, students interview another Black entertainer on the subject of discrimination in the performing arts.

2. Distribute copies of the interview. Tell the students that you will read the interview to them; as you read, they should underline or highlight the parts that they found most interesting, most powerful, or most emotional.

3. Read the interview aloud as students mark their favorite lines.

4. Tell the students that you will read the article a second time. This time, ask the students to join in and say their underlined parts aloud as you read.

5. Read the interview again. You should hear different voices joining you at different parts. Some moments may be silent but that other phrases might be read aloud by the class.

6. Lead the class in a discussion.

- Why did certain phrases affect the majority of the class?
- What made them choose particular phrases?
- Do any of the phrases have anything in common?
- What did they learn from the phrases about discrimination?

7. Divide the students into small groups (groups of three are ideal).

8. Ask the groups to discuss their reactions to the article. Lead questions might include

- How did the interview make you feel?

- Why do you think segregation and racism occur?
- Do you think segregation and prejudice still exist today?
- What are other minority groups?
- How did the interview make you feel?
- Why do you think segregation and racism occur?
- Do you think segregation and prejudice still exist today?
- What are other types of minorities besides racial?
- How do prejudices affect them?
- How do prejudices affect them?

9. The group should then write a letter to either the student reporters or Malaya Rucker in response to the interview.

9. If time remains, ask a member of each group to read the letters aloud.  
Possible discussion questions:

### Follow-up activity:

Students can conduct their own interviews with community members.  
Possible topics:

- How does prejudice affect your life?
- Have you been a victim of discrimination?
- What was life like before the Civil Rights Movement?
- What was life like during the marches, sit-ins and boycotts

of the

- Civil Rights movement?
- How did your life change as a result of the Civil Rights Movement?
- Do you know of any group of people who remains discriminated

nated

# Interview with Malaya Rucker

**by Jessica Nunez and Michael Spurgeon**

**Jessica:** This is our interview with Malaya Rucker. My name is Jessica Nunez and my partner's name is Michael Spurgeon. We are student reporters. Ms. Rucker, what sticks in your head most when you think about growing up during the times of segregation?

**Malaya:** I'll tell you about the discrimination I remember most, because it probably had the most profound impact on me. I've studied dance all my life, classical piano, classical voice. And when I was growing up, there were very few stars in the ballet or opera who were black.

**Jessica:** How come?

**Malaya:** During that time, there were very few opportunities given to people of color who wished to perform classical works.

**Jessica:** Were there any at all?

**Malaya:** Yes; Marian Anderson was one of the women I did see as a role model. In fact, I was named after her. My full name is Marian-Malaya Rucker. Marian Anderson was African American, and she was a very famous singer. She sang all over the world and was internationally acclaimed. But in 1939, when Marian Anderson wanted to sing at Constitution Hall in Washington, D.C., she wasn't allowed to.

**Michael:** Even though she was famous. . .

**Malaya:** The Daughters of the American Revolution owned Constitution Hall. They were a group of white women whose ancestors had aided the Revolution. They would not let a black person perform there. Then Marian Anderson tried to sing at Central High School in Washington, which was a white school, and the board of education turned her down.

**Michael:** That's not fair.

**Malaya:** That's what I've always felt, too. But she was black, and it was during segregation, when talent or achievement didn't always make a difference. There's a good ending to the story, though. The federal government invited her to give an outdoor concert at the Lincoln Memorial, and seventy-five thousand people came to hear her.

**Jessica:** Okay, did you ever experience any discrimination like Marian Anderson?

**Malaya:** Yes, I did in a way. When I was in ballet school, the ballet companies had very few brown-skinned women dancing. I was told that I wasn't the right "type."

**Michael:** Why? What do you mean, "not the right 'type'"?

**Malaya:** Our body structures were considered to be improper- our skin too dark, lips too large, hips too big. Even if we were small and thin and met all the other criteria, just our skin color alone would often exclude us.

**Michael:** Did you do anything about it?

**Malaya:** I decided that regardless of people's attitudes, I was going to succeed. I've performed in many places throughout the world. I've not allowed experiences of prejudice to stop me, but they still exist, and they probably won't go away for a long, long time.

**Jessica and Michael:** Thank you. This concludes our interview.

Excerpted from *Oh, Freedom! Kids Talk About the Civil Rights Movement with the People who Made it Happen* by Casey King and Linda Barrett Osborne.

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**Ann Arbor School for the Performing Arts**

4090 Geddes Road  
Ann Arbor, MI 48103  
734-995-4625  
<http://community.mlive.com/cc/arts>

**ArtServe Michigan**

17515 West Nine Mile Road, Suite 250  
Southfield, MI 48075  
248-557-8288 x 16  
[www.artservemichigan.org](http://www.artservemichigan.org)

**Arts League of Michigan**

1528 Woodward Avenue, Suite 600  
Detroit, MI 48226  
313-964-1670

**Detroit Public Television, Channel 56, Detroit**

Ken Burns's new series *Jazz* will premiere in January 2001  
Visit <http://www.pbs.org/jazz/yesmail.html> for details

**University of Michigan Center for Afroamerican and African Studies**

200 W. Hall  
Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1092  
734.764.5513

**University of Michigan School of Music**

Calendar of Events  
2258 Moore  
Ann Arbor, MI 48109-2085  
734-764-0594

Jazz Studies  
231 Stearns  
Ann Arbor, MI 48109-2085  
734-763-1321

**Wayne State University Music Department**

5104 Gullen Mall  
Detroit, MI 48201  
313-57-1795

**WDET-FM 101.9, Detroit**

Public radio featuring Ed Love's jazz programming, 7 - 10pm  
Primarily post-1950 jazz

**WEMU 89.1 FM, Ypsilanti**

All-jazz public radio station featuring jazz of all eras

### University Musical Society

[www.ums.org](http://www.ums.org)

### Charles Mingus/Mingus Big Band

[www.mingusmingusmingus.com](http://www.mingusmingusmingus.com) (official site)

<http://webusers.siba.fi/~eonttone/mingus/>

### Breaking the Color Barrier

[www.teacher.scholastic.com/barrier/home.htm](http://www.teacher.scholastic.com/barrier/home.htm)

### Civil Rights/African-American History

[www.teacher.scholastic.com/researchtools/articlearchives/honormlk/index.htm](http://www.teacher.scholastic.com/researchtools/articlearchives/honormlk/index.htm)

### Integration of Little Rock Central High School (Arkansas) as told by Melba Pattillo Beals, one of the “Little Rock 9”

[www.scholastic.com/barrier/hwyf/mpbstory/index.htm](http://www.scholastic.com/barrier/hwyf/mpbstory/index.htm)

### Louis Armstrong

<http://www.redhotjazz.com/louie.html>

<http://www.gatewayno.com/Music/Armstrong.html>

### Duke Ellington

<http://www.ilinks.net/~holmesr/ellington-bio.htm>

<http://home.flash.net/~rdreagan/duke.shtml>

<http://www.duke.edu/~mjl2/>

### Ella Fitzgerald

<http://www.geocities.com/Hollywood/4858/ella.html>

[http://museum.media.org/ella/misc/ef\\_blurb.html](http://museum.media.org/ella/misc/ef_blurb.html)

<http://www.downbeat.com/sections/artists/text/bio.asp?from=fans&id1=3741>

### Orval Faubus

[www.go.grolier.com](http://www.go.grolier.com)

### Dizzy Gillespie

<http://www.geocities.com/BourbonStreet/8446/>

<http://www.duke.edu/~fdp/>

### Benny Goodman

<http://www.davidmulliss.com.au/BennyGoodman/benny.htm>

[www.go.grolier.com\\_](http://www.go.grolier.com_)

### Billie Holiday

<http://www.billieholidaycircle.freemove.co.uk>

<http://www.cmgwww.com/music/holiday/index.html>

### Charlie Parker

<http://www.cmgwww.com/music/parker/parker.html>

<http://www.charlieparker.com/>

## Bibliography/ Recommended Reading

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- Mingus, Charles. *Beneath the Underdog*. London: Penguin Books, 1971.
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- Nicholson, Stuart.** *Ella Fitzgerald: A Biography of the First Lady of Jazz*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1993.
- Reisner, Robert George.** *Bird: The Legend of Charlie Parker*. New York: Da Capo Press, 1962.
- Schuller, Cunther.** *Early Jazz: Its Roots and Musical Development*. New York: Oxford Press, 1989.
- Tucker, Mark.** *The Duke Ellington Reader*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1986.

## Suggested Video

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***A Great Day in Harlem*. ABC Home Video, 1995.**

This documentary was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Documentary. It focuses on Art Kane and his 1958 dream of bringing together "everyone in the jazz world" in one place for a photo. Marian McPartland, Art Blakey, Milt Hinton, Dizzy Gillespie, Thelonious Monk, Count Basie, and Mingus all participated in this historic photo, a copy of which hangs in the Library of Congress today.

***Dizzy Gillespie and Charles Mingus*. Vidjazz, 1998.**

Concert video.

***Live in Norway 1964*. Vidjazz, 1998.**

Concert video.

***Mingus 1968*. Rhapsody, 1995.**

Concert video.

***Stations of the Elevated*. Rhapsody, 1995.**

This feature film was scored by Charles Mingus. He does not appear in the film.

***Triumph of the Underdog*. Shanachie, 1997.**

Biography of Mingus featuring numerous interviews with Mingus' musicians and family as well as performance excerpts. Teachers of young children should preview this video before showing it.

## Suggested Listening

### Louis Armstrong

*Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington – Together for the First Time and The Great Reunion*, Roulette Records, 1961

*Satch Plays Fats*, Columbia, 1955

*Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (4-CD set), Columbia, 1923-34

### Miles Davis

*At the Plugged Nickel*, CBS/Sony, 1965

*E.S.P.*, Columbia Records, 1965

*Kind of Blue*, Columbia Records, 1959

*The Best of Miles Davis and Gil Evans*, Sony, 1957-98

### Duke Ellington

*The Blanton-Webster Band* (3 CD-set), RCA/Bluebird Records, 1940-42

### Ella Fitzgerald

*Ella Fitzgerald; First Lady of Song* (3 CD-set), Verve Records, 1949-66

### Billie Holiday

*Strange Fruit*, Atlantic Records, 1937-42

### Charles Mingus

*Mingus Ah Um*, Columbia Records, 1959

*The Complete 1959 CBS Charles Mingus Sessions*, Sony, 1998

*Mingus, Mingus, Mingus, Mingus, Mingus*, GRP Records, 1995

*Charles Mingus Presents Charles Mingus*, Candid Records, 2000

*Jazz Composers Workshop*, Savoy Jazz, 2000

*The Black Saint and the Sinner Lady*, GRP Records, 1995

*Ken Burns Jazz: Charles Mingus*, Sony, 1993

*Changes One*, Rhino Records, 1993.

*New Tijuana Moods*, RCA, 1996

*Summertime*, Masters Intercontinental, 1999

*Thirteen Pictures: The Charles Mingus Anthology*, Rhino Records, 1993

*Oh Yeah*, Atlantic, 1990

*Blues and Roots*, Atlantic, 1990

### Mingus Big Band

*Blues and Politics*, Dreyfus, 1999

*Que Viva Mingus!*, Dreyfus, 1988

*Live in Time*, Dreyfus, 1997

*Gunslinging Bird*, Dreyfus, 1995

*Mingus Big Band 93: Nostalgia in Times Square*, Dreyfus, 1993

### Charlie Parker

*The Best of Bird on Savoy*, Savoy Records, 1945.

## Drawings, Letters and Reviews

After the performance, please conduct follow-up activities with your students. Have students think about, discuss, and internalize the production they've just seen. Please have the students create drawings or write thank you letters and reviews. These items will be shared with artists and the sponsors who make these performances possible. Encourage the students to be as imaginative and creative as possible!

**Send drawings, letters and reviews to:**  
**Youth Education Program**  
**University Musical Society**  
**Burton Memorial Tower**  
**881 North University Avenue**  
**Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1011**



