Developing wider listening: jazz, part 3

KS4/5

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Miles Davis in 1963

Introduction

The final part of our Developing Wider Listening resource on jazz focuses on what happened in jazz after the Second World War. In parts one and two (*Music Teacher*, October 2023 and January 2024), we followed the development of jazz from its roots in **work songs** and **spirituals** to **ragtime** and onwards to the explosion of **Dixieland jazz** in the early 20th century. As advances in technology accelerated the reach and appeal of jazz, and jazz musicians migrated north to Chicago and New York, we saw the rise of the big band and the birth of **swing**, which dominated the musical scene in the 1930s. We also learned about the dominant roles played by celebrity jazz instrumentalists and singers such as Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Benny Goodman, Ella Fitzgerald and Billie Holiday. At the end of part two, we took a brief trip to France and the music of Django Reinhardt and Stéphane Grappelli.

Now, we pick up the journey of jazz in the 1940s, as the Second World War dominated the lives of billions and the heady days of swing must have seemed very far away. As the war ended, jazz compacted itself, and small ensembles sprang up in major American musical centres – not least New York, where a new breed of young, talented musicians took the genre in vastly different directions. We will look at these new styles and consider how jazz 'coped' with the increasing popularity of rock and pop music as the teenagers of the 1950s and 1960s looked to other forms of music for their dancing.

As with other resources in the Developing Wider Listening series, which has been running since 2020, the intention is that Key Stage 4 and 5 students can build around their more specialist knowledge, linking these and other musical styles to the music they study for their appraising papers, the music they compose and the music they play, to help them develop that all-important broad understanding of musical context and style.

The 1940s

The age of big-band swing was abruptly ended by the onset of the Second World War, which America joined in 1941. Many young jazz performers were drafted, and bands found it increasingly difficult to find places to play. Radio kept the biggest names in work, but a lot of bands broke up, and in the years following the war, jazz took a turn towards smaller ensembles, which would perform in clubs rather than dance halls. Additionally, in the 1940s American musical taste began to move away from jazz towards **rhythm and blues** and **country** music, and to many jazz became more of an 'acquired taste'.

Comparison activity: jazz redesigns itself

This activity was originally entitled 'Jazz reinvents itself', but to call what happened in the 1940s a 'reinvention' is to miss the point slightly. There was a partly forced, partly desired move away from big band swing at this time, spearheaded by several young up-and-coming jazz musicians, but there was also a desire among established artists to develop the genre into something a little more cerebral and creative to what swing – to some people's eyes and ears – had become.

There's always an uneasy relationship in music between the commercial – that which is made to satisfy public demand, make money and court popular taste – and the creative. That's not to say that commercial music is not creative – in fact, the very best of it is hugely inventive and original – but performing and composing musicians have always struggled between the wish to express themselves and the constant nagging of record companies to produce successful singles and albums. This was as true in jazz then as it is now in pop music, and the threat of new popular styles in the 1940s certainly worried the finance guys at the major labels.

It took some great recordings to persuade others to follow more inventive directions, like Coleman Hawkins's famous version of 'Body and Soul' from 1939. The song had been written in 1930 for English singer Gertrude Lawrence, and Louis Armstrong recorded it the same year, but it was Hawkins's version that really caught the attention of the jazz-loving public, and it instantly propelled the tenor sax player to fame.

The most interesting thing about Hawkins's version is that he barely plays the original melody. To show this, first play your students this version, recorded by Frank Sinatra in 1947 along with trumpet player Bobby Hackett: **www.youtube.com/watch?v=NtVxgon33CY**

Either before or after playing them the Sinatra version, get them to look at this lead sheet of the tune, which is available via MuseScore: **https://musescore.com/user/498481/scores/6480402**

Now, keeping the lead sheet handy, play them Coleman Hawkins's version (which you might remember we used in the first of these three resources as part of a general introduction to jazz): **www.youtube.com/watch?v=zUFg6HvljDE**

You certainly hear the opening phrase, but after this the **improvisations** only hint at the melody. Get students to think about what Hawkins is doing – how is he staying true to the original? How is he developing and **embellishing** the original melody? What are the rest of the band doing? Why do you think this recording became such a hit?

You can find a full transcription of Coleman Hawkins's improvisation here: **www.sokillingman.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/Body-And-Soul-Bb.pdf**

Poignantly, 'Body and Soul' was recorded by Tony Bennett and Amy Winehouse in 2011, just four months before Winehouse died at the tragically young age of 27. The music world also mourned the death of Tony Bennett earlier this year. If you have time, their version is worth a listen: **www.youtube.com/watch?v=_OFMkCeP6ok**

Bebop

Coleman Hawkins had cut his jazz teeth playing in Fletcher Henderson's orchestra before spending time in Europe during the 1930s. He was surprised on his return to the US to find jazz musicians still playing in the same swing style, and held that they had made no advances since he was last in the country. His 'Body and Soul' recording was even criticised for containing 'wrong notes'. Hawkins had committed to tape what one more understanding reporter called 'the early tremors of **bebop**'.

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Dizzy Gillespie in 1955

In the early 1940s, a young Kansas City saxophonist named Charlie Parker found himself in New York, playing in Earl Hines's big band along with an equally young trumpeter called Dizzy Gillespie. Students might remember reference to Earl Hines in part two of this resource (January 2024), and you could remind them of his **virtuosic** solo in Louis Armstrong's 'West End Blues'. Hines always tried to recruit young, talented musicians in his band, and he encouraged them to challenge themselves in their improvisations.

Parker and Gillespie soon became regulars at a jazz club named Minton's Playhouse, in Harlem, where pianist Thelonious Monk and drummer Max Roach were in the house band. Monday night at

Minton's was jam night, and quickly became dominated by these musicians, along with others like guitarist Charlie Christian, trumpeter Roy Eldridge (who was Gillespie's mentor) and Coleman Hawkins himself.

Their playing was fast and complex. They would take well-known existing tunes and improvise on them, trying to outdo each other in their use of complicated chord **extensions**, scales and rhythms. This new, breathless style became known as bebop.

Listening activity: features of bebop

Let's take two examples of bebop from the 1940s – one from Parker and one from Gillespie – and use them to identify the main characteristics of the style. Get your students to discuss the key features of **melody, harmony, rhythm** and **instrumentation**.

1. Charlie Parker: 'Ornithology' (1946) **www.youtube.com/watch?v=fsAMAIaas94**. The title is a reference to Parker's nickname, 'Bird'. Ornithology is a **contrafact**, which is a jazz term describing a new melody written to an existing set of **changes** (a chord sequence) – in this case, those of the 1940s standard 'How High the Moon'. It features Parker on alto, plus a band of trumpet, piano, bass and drums.
2. Dizzy Gillespie: 'Salt Peanuts' (1945) **www.youtube.com/watch?v=FJrUBEtoNQU**. Gillespie wrote this tune as far back as 1941, along with drummer Kenny Clarke, and made this definitive recording with Parker also appearing on alto. The 'salt peanuts' sung **refrain** had appeared in several jazz hits prior to this, and the arrangement is a contrafact based on the changes of the famous Gershwin song 'I Got Rhythm'.

Some of the key features of bebop, which you can help students whittle their observations down to, are:

- Fast **tempos**: bebop was not intended for dancing.
- Driving support from the **rhythm section** – drums, bass and piano provide a complex, colourful foundation for the soloists to improvise over.
- The use of the hi-hat or ride cymbal to keep time, while other parts of the drumkit punctuate.
- Fast-moving, **chromatic walking bass**.
- Complex chords and chord extensions.
- Small bands supporting virtuosic soloists, who improvise using scales and **modes** based loosely on the chord changes.
- **Head arrangements**: first the band plays the head (the main tune), and then **solos** are taken over the underlying chords. The head may return at the end.
- Contrafacts: popular with bebop players because they didn't have to credit or pay royalties to the writers of the original melodies if they only used their chord structures!

As an extension activity, you could invite students to compare the original songs 'How High the Moon' and 'I Got Rhythm' to their contrafacts above. Links to versions of these songs and their lead sheets (for the chord progressions) are below:

'How High the Moon'

- Recording: **www.youtube.com/watch?v=djZCe7ou3kY**
- Lead sheet: **https://musescore.com/user/498481/scores/6477032**

'I Got Rhythm'

- Recording: **www.youtube.com/watch?v=NYRtF3fNkGQ**
- Lead sheet: **https://musescore.org/sites/musescore.org/files/2019-02/I%20Got%20Rhythm-Piano.pdf**

Listening exercise: 'A Night in Tunisia'

Let's pause now to tackle a general listening exercise on one of Dizzy Gillespie's most famous tunes, 'A Night in Tunisia'. Gillespie wrote it at the piano in the early 1940s, initially calling it 'Interlude', and it became one of the signature tunes of his band. His 1946 recording of it (**www.youtube.com/watch?v=8hq1jdqAPac**) was inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame in 2004.

I've picked a different recording, that made by Miles Davis and Charlie Parker, also in 1946. It features iconic solos from both musicians, including a sax **break** from Parker that has become imprinted in jazz folklore.

Listen to 'A Night in Tunisia' here (**www.youtube.com/watch?v=KxibMBV3nFo**) from the beginning up to 2:05 and answer the questions below.

1 Which two instruments play at the beginning?
2 Describe the music played by these instruments in the first ten seconds of the track. What is the name given to this kind of repetitive figure? What rhythmic feature does it contain? What instrument joins in at around 0:06?
3 The head (the main melody) is played by the trumpet at 0:17. What 'modification' has Miles Davis used to alter the trumpet's sound?
4 The head lasts from 0:17 to 1:01 and is in 32-bar form, with four 8-bar phrases in the pattern AABA. What differences are there in the B phrase?
5 Describe the music played from 1:01 to 1:18.
6 Charlie Parker's iconic sax break begins at 1:18 and leads into a solo. What features of bebop can you hear in this section?
7 What happens at 1:45?
8 What instruments provide backing for these two solos, and what kind of parts do they play?

Suggested answers:

1 Guitar and piano
2 A two-bar **riff** consisting of the same melodic pattern sequentially repeated. It features **syncopation**. The (double) bass joins midway.
3 A mute – probably a **harmon mute**.
4 The melody of the B phrase is taken over by Parker's alto sax and is more melodious, relying less on repeating short **motifs**. It also has a swing style accompaniment with walking bass, rather than the syncopated bass riff.
5 The two saxophones and the trumpet play a repeating idea in unison, as a kind of link passage. It's a syncopated riff that repeats six times.
6 Complex chromatic notes and virtuosic fast rhythms, a loose hold on the original chords but with frequent non-harmony notes and extensions. Lots of decoration, and punctuating hits from the drums, over a hi-hat- or cymbal-driven groove and walking bass. The solo shows off Parker's technique, tone and dexterity.
7 Miles Davis's trumpet takes over for the third and fourth phrases (BA). He plays with swing rhythms and his solo is more **stepwise**, rising and falling, though still with complex chromatic and modal note choices.
8 Drums (see above), piano (chords played in a syncopated rhythm, known as comping) and walking bass.

Further bebop listening

Two more iconic bebop tunes can be found below:

- Charlie Parker: 'Anthropology' **www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zq3HDQr7xWw**
- Thelonious Monk: 'Round Midnight' **www.youtube.com/watch?v=fH14OMQY_bo**

Cool jazz

In the late 1940s and 1950s, a more subdued style of jazz emerged, mostly associated with Miles Davis, Gerry Mulligan (baritone sax) and, a little later, pianist Dave Brubeck. This became dubbed **cool jazz**, not because it was cool in the sense of being more in vogue than other forms, but because its approach was less 'hot' than the complex, energetic bebop style. Soloists played with warmer, more introverted tone, with slow or no **vibrato**, and drummers subtly coloured the music rather than driving it.

A lot of the musicians associated with cool jazz, including Mulligan and Brubeck, were based in California in the 1950s. The label **West Coast jazz** became attached to their music, but cool jazz was just as likely to crop up in New York, where Miles Davis and tenor player Lester Young were at the forefront of the style. Mulligan teamed up with trumpet player Chet Baker, and a group called the Modern Jazz Quartet was also notable for incorporating classical structures in their music.

Let's focus on two artists, and look at some of their key recordings from this time.

Listening: Miles Davis

In 1944, Miles Davis famously skipped his classes at New York's prestigious Juilliard School of Music to jam with Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie at Minton's and elsewhere. In the 1950s, Davis released several key recordings that could be considered examples of the cool jazz genre.

The Birth of the Cool (1957) was a compilation of recordings made earlier in the decade with a nine-piece band including Mulligan and piano/arranger Gil Evans, in which Davis first started to experiment with a more subdued, introverted sound.

Kind of Blue was released in 1959 and recorded on just two days that year, with a smaller band including tenor player John Coltrane and pianist Bill Evans. On this album, Davis developed a new improvisation style based on modes and riffs, and kept the arrangements stripped back and clear. Some of the most famous of his tunes were on this album, such as 'So What' and 'All Blues', and the album is considered by many to be one of the greatest jazz albums ever made.

Sketches of Spain saw Davis team up with Gil Evans again and take yet another new direction, into the realms of **fusion**. All the tracks had Spanish flavour, including an extended extemporisation on Rodrigo's famous *Concierto di Aranjuez* for guitar and orchestra. Released in 1960, this album contributed to increasing interest in Spanish and Latin-American music.

Here are three tracks, one from each album, for students to listen to and consider in the context of the cool jazz genre. If you listen to them in order, you can hear the move in style from bebop to Spanish-infused modality.

- 'Move' from *Birth of the Cool*: **www.youtube.com/watch?v=4WjU4eXYWg4**
- 'So What' from *Kind of Blue*: **www.youtube.com/watch?v=zqNTltOGh5c**
- 'Concierto di Aranjuez' (part 1) from *Sketches of Spain*: **www.youtube.com/watch?v=CsWidlDldVk**

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Dave Brubeck in 1964

Listening and performing: Dave Brubeck

Californian pianist Dave Brubeck formed his quartet in 1951 but it had changing personnel. The most stable line-up, and arguably the best, included sax player Paul Desmond who also co-wrote a lot of the tunes that the band recorded with Brubeck. The band were at the forefront of West Coast jazz and combined classical ideas with more traditional and current jazz thinking, as well as a smattering of new ideas. Brubeck became known for exploring **irregular metres**, and the quartet's 1959 album *Time Out* encapsulates this fusion. Students can hear this through the following two tracks (one of which became the first million-selling single in jazz history).

- 'Blue Rondo à la Turk' (**www.youtube.com/watch?v=vKNZqMod-xo**): a complex nod to Mozart in 9/8 time, divided into 2+2+2+3. Students can follow or play from this score: **https://musescore.com/fierabrass/scores/286641**
- 'Take Five' (**www.youtube.com/watch?v=vmDDOFXSgAs**): Paul Desmond's famous composition, which features probably the most famous 5/4 riff in all music. If students want to play this, as a solo or a duet, they can find an arrangement here: **https://musescore.com/user/159276/scores/3164576**

Listening and composing: a brief journey through Latin Jazz

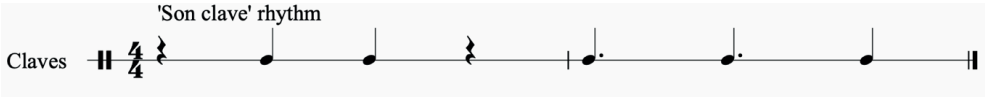
'We play jazz with the Latin touch, that's all,' said legendary American vibraphone and timbales player Tito Puente (1923-2000). Puente was at the forefront of **Afro-Cuban jazz** throughout the second half of the 20th century and composed many pieces incorporating Cuban and Caribbean styles such as **mambo, son** and **cha-cha-cha**.

His famous composition 'Oye como va' is a cha-cha-cha made famous by guitarist Carlos Santana and his band, who were known for their brand of **Latin rock** – you can compare Puente's version with Santana's here:

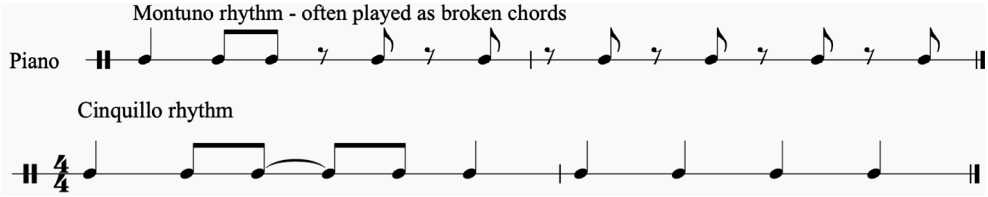
- Tito Puente: 'Oye como va' (1962): **www.youtube.com/watch?v=zZQh4IL7unM** (this live performance is from 1991)
- Santana: 'Oye como va' (1971): **www.youtube.com/watch?v=9QhchQD_woM** (this live performance is from 2011)

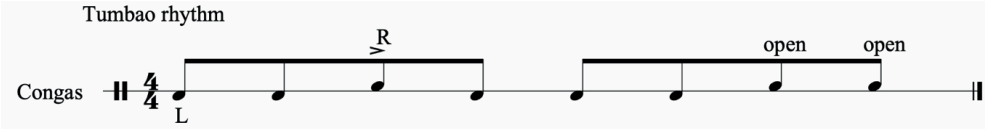
In fact, Latin infusion has been part of jazz since its very early days. Cuban rhythms such as the **habanera** can be heard in WC Handy's 'St Louis Blues' (1914) (**www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gpp75gQ-T6Y**) and in Duke Ellington/Juan Tizol's 1936 composition 'Caravan' (**www.youtube.com/watch?v=YkLBSLxo5LE**).

Afro-Cuban rhythms incorporate **ostinatos**, such as the famous son clave pattern, which is a **2+3** repetitive rhythm that can be written like this:



Other Afro-Cuban rhythms include the **tresillo** (which is simply the '3' part of the clave 2+3 rhythm) and the **montuno, cinquillo** and **tumbao** which are all shown below.



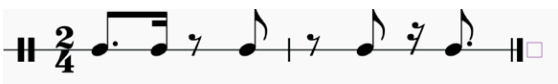


A good example of early Afro-Cuban jazz is 'Manteca', written by Dizzy Gillespie and Chano Pozo in 1947 (**www.youtube.com/watch?v=A5tRGMHfKrE** – this version is from 1971). Listen to it and see if your students can pick out some of the Afro-Cuban rhythms within it – it's also a good chance to see Gillespie's trademark trumpet design in use!

For further examples of Afro-Cuban jazz try these:

- Stan Kenton: 'The Peanut Vendor' (1946, this version 1972): **www.youtube.com/watch?v=1_okd-n42po**
- Mongo Santamaria: 'Afro Blue' (1959): **www.youtube.com/watch?v=YbE7jf_Hp5w**

Afro-Brazilian Jazz also became popular in the 1950s and 1960s, particularly pieces influenced by the rhythms of the **samba** and **mambo** dances. A more sophisticated version of samba called **bossa nova** became popular in the 1950s, and the best-known example of a jazz tune in this style is 'The Girl from Ipanema' by Antonio Carlos Jobim and João Gilberto, featuring the vocals of Gilberto himself and his wife Astrud, and released in 1964 (**www.youtube.com/watch?v=c5QfXjsoNe4**). One of the key rhythms in bossa nova is closely allied to the clave rhythm we saw earlier, and usually played on the rim of the snare drum:



Bossa nova is harmonically quite complex, borrowing some of the extended chords and chromatic progressions from bebop. Here's a lead sheet for further study, if you so wish: **https://geosci.uchicago.edu/~archer/jazz_band/sheet/girl_from_impanema.pdf**

There's lots of material and ideas in this section to spark a composition project, perhaps getting students to work out some rhythms based on one or more of the Latin styles above, and some simple progressions using C, F, G and Am 7th chords.

Finally, for some astonishing virtuosity in the Latin jazz style, look no further than the talented Michel Camilo and his trio. In this tune, 'On Fire', the drummer Horacio Hernández plays the son clave pattern on a wood block with – wait for it – his foot: **www.youtube.com/watch?v=gXtieqCN_8Q**

Mopping up

Camilo comes from the Dominican Republic and cites as his major influences several artists that we haven't had time to look at, such as Art Tatum, Chick Corea, Oscar Peterson and Keith Jarrett. By way of a mop-up of some major jazz artists that we haven't covered, including a few from today's jazz scene, try any of these well-known tunes:

- Art Tatum: 'Tea for Two' (three versions, all played by Tatum, from 1933, 1939 and 1953) **www.youtube.com/watch?v=9kMEPYU1Xwg**
- Oscar Peterson: 'C Jam Blues' (1964) **www.youtube.com/watch?v=NTJhHn-TuDY**
- John Coltrane: 'My Favourite Things' (1961) **www.youtube.com/watch?v=JQvc-Gkwhow**. Coltrane found fame in Miles Davis's band (he's on the *Kind of Blue* album).
- Herbie Hancock: 'Chameleon' (1973, this version 2010) **www.youtube.com/watch?v=oweK8H4okZk**. Hancock started out as a pianist with greats such as Miles Davis but was a leading artist in the development of **jazz fusion** in the 1970s.
- Chick Corea: 'Spain' (1973, this version 2004) **www.youtube.com/watch?v=IWBkVucVMCY**. Corea was also a pioneer in the jazz fusion style. He preludes this, his most famous tune, with a little improvisation on the Rodrigo we heard from Miles Davis earlier.