

Jazz Up Your Classroom: Using Jazz to Sing, Say, Dance, and Play

James Eldreth

jweldreth@gmail.com

Ph.D. Candidate

Pennsylvania State University

Important elements of jazz: *rhythm* (e.g. syncopation), *style* (e.g. swing), and *improvisation*

Swing: What does it mean?

Discuss with your students how it is different, then practice and perform.

Common student comments:

“The music sounds jagged.”

“The music doesn’t line up with the beats.”

Improvisation: Spontaneous creativity!

Many elementary music teachers already do improvisation in their classrooms:

77% with instruments; 66% with movement; 46% with voice; 10% never

However, *jazz* improvisation is much less prevalent in elementary music classrooms:

33% never do jazz improvisation activities; 29% only as part of a jazz unit

Numbers based on 770 responses to a nationwide survey of practicing elementary teachers.

Create your own jazz materials!

Scales that work well with Orff xylophones:

Blues Scales – E (Bb bars) and B (F# bars)

Pentatonic “keys” for the E blues scale: E minor and G major

Pentatonic “keys” for the B blues scale: B minor and D major

Minor Pentatonic Scales – A, D, E, G (Bb bars), and B (F# bars)

Major Pentatonic Scales – C, F, G, Bb (Bb bars), and D (F# bars)

~~~~~ **SET YOUR STUDENTS UP FOR SUCCESS!** ~~~~~

## Essential components of performing jazz:

Bass drum (*steady beat*), hi-hat (2 & 4), ride cymbal (*swing rhythm pattern*)

Bass (*walking bass line*), melody (*song*), improvisation (*creativity*)

## Let's play! – What this might look like in an elementary music classroom:

Drums – always keep a steady beat!

Alternatives – pats, rhythm sticks, claves, woodblocks

Egg shakers – steady beat turns into “hi-hat” 2 & 4

Alternatives – snaps, maracas, cabasas, shekere/axatse/agbe

Triangles – steady beat turns into 2 & 4, then turns into ride cymbal swing rhythm pattern

Alternatives – claps, cymbals, cowbells, gankogui/agogo bells

Boomwhackers – bass line (one student per note using numbers, letters, or music)

\*Use octavator caps however you wish. I like to use one with and one without.\*

Xylophones – melody, improvisation (*set up in advance: E blues or E minor pentatonic*)

Singing – melody (use lyrics, solfege, or “la”), improvisation (use “scat” words)

Recorders – melody (high or low E), improvise (E blues, E minor pentatonic, or BAG+E)

Piano – bass line, melody, improvisation (feature students taking piano lessons?)

Ukulele – strum the chords on the steady beat (depending on playing level)

Bass ukulele – play bass line with an amp (depending on playing level)

Scarves – no activity is complete without improvised dancing and free movement

Alternatives – neck ties, ribbon streamers, props

## Listening & Movement Activity:

Materials – book, song, and scarves

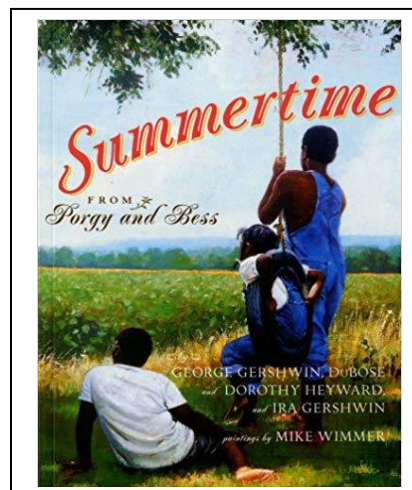
*Summertime from Porgy and Bess*

by: George Gershwin,

DuBose and Dorothy

Heyward, and Ira Gershwin

paintings by: Mike Wimmer



# C Jam Blues (in E)

## An Elementary Jazz Experience

Duke Ellington  
arr. James Eldreth

The musical score is written in 4/4 time and consists of three systems. Each system has three staves: Melody (treble clef), Piano (grand staff), and Boom-whacker (bass clef). The Boom-whacker part includes fret numbers below the notes.

**System 1 (Measures 1-4):** Chord E7. Melody: G4, A4, B4, C5, G4, F4, E4. Piano: G4, A4, B4, C5, G4, F4, E4. Boom-whacker: 4, 8, 11, 1, 2, 1, 11, 8, 4, 8, 11, 1, 2, 1, 11, 8.

**System 2 (Measures 5-8):** Chords A7 and E7. Melody: G4, A4, B4, C5, G4, F4, E4. Piano: G4, A4, B4, C5, G4, F4, E4. Boom-whacker: 9, 1, 4, 6, 7, 6, 4, 1, 4, 8, 11, 1, 2, 1, 11, 8.

**System 3 (Measures 9-12):** Chords B7 and E7. Melody: G4, A4, B4, C5, G4, F4, E4. Piano: G4, A4, B4, C5, G4, F4, E4. Boom-whacker: 11, 3, 6, 8, 9, 8, 6, 3, 4, 8, 11, 1, 2, 1, 11, 8.

### LYRICS

Baby, take me, down to, Duke's Place!  
Wildest, box in, town is, Duke's Place!  
Love that, piano, sound in, Duke's Place!

Saxes, do their, tricks in, Duke's Place!  
Fellas, swing their, chicks in, Duke's Place!  
Come on, get your, kicks in, Duke's Place!

If you've, never, been to, Duke's Place!  
Take your, tootsies, into, Duke's Place!  
Life is, in a, spin in, Duke's Place!

# Mr. P.C. (in E)

## An Elementary Jazz Experience

John Coltrane  
arr. James Eldreth

The musical score is arranged in three systems. Each system contains three staves: Melody (treble clef), Piano (grand staff), and Boomwhacker (bass clef). The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. Chord markings are placed above the Melody staff: E-7 (measures 1-4), A-7 (measures 5-8), and E-7 (measures 9-12). Fret numbers are written below the Boomwhacker staff: 4 7 11 0 (measures 1-2), 2 0 11 7 (measures 3-4), 4 7 11 0 (measures 5-6), 2 0 11 7 (measures 7-8), 0 4 7 9 (measures 9-10), 11 3 6 7 (measures 11-12), and 4 7 11 0 (measures 13-14), 2 0 11 7 (measures 15-16). Measure numbers 5, 9, and 13 are indicated at the start of their respective systems.

### LYRICS

If you want a man who really plays a lot of rhythm, you dig P.C.  
If you want a man to get the people swingin' with him, you dig P.C.  
Talkin' 'bout rhythm. He's got the rhythm, dig P.C.

If you wanna hear the fiddle played the way it should be, you dig P.C.  
If you wanna hear him play the way it really should be, you dig P.C.  
Talkin' 'bout rhythm. He's got the rhythm, dig P.C.