



Schooltime
EXPLORING JAZZ WITH BYRON
Listening Activities & Discussion Guide

Use this guide before, during, or after your *Exploring Jazz with Byron* concerts at Heinz Hall.
Playlists of featured concert repertoire to use with this guide are available at
www.pittsburghsymphony.org/schooltime.

TRADITIONAL

(Sometimes I Feel Like a) Motherless Child

- Look up the lyrics to “Motherless Child” before listening to the music. What emotions do the lyrics convey?
- Based on the lyrics, what do you think the music will sound like? What kind of instruments and tempo do you expect? How do you expect the music to feel?
- Listen to a recording of “Motherless Child.” How did the music match or not match what you expected?
- Listen for the melody in “Motherless Child.” What instrument(s) perform the melody? How many times is the melody repeated?
- Did anything about the music surprise you?

GEORGE GERSHWIN

Summertime

In the style of Sidney Bechet

- Which instruments play the melody? Who plays the melody first? Who plays it second?
- Listen for the form of the song. Does the melody repeat exactly or change a little?
- Listen to articulation. What choices do the musicians make to show expression?
- Listen for the beat. Which instrument has the strongest steady beat?
- What do you imagine when you listen to the music?
- Look up the lyrics to “Summertime.” How do the musical choices of the musicians help to convey the meaning of the lyrics?
- What emotions do you think Gershwin was trying to evoke?

JELLY ROLL MORTON

Black Bottom Stomp

- The piece “Black Bottom Stomp” includes many instrument solos. Make a list of all of the instruments that you hear playing a solo in this piece.
- A motif is a short musical phrase that is repeated throughout a piece. Raise your hand each time you hear the motif in “Black Bottom Stomp.”
- Listen carefully to the middle, or development, of “Black Bottom Stomp.” What happens?
- In what ways is this piece different from the previous piece, “Summertime”?
- Listen to another piece of music on the *Exploring Jazz–Ragtime* playlist. What similarities to “Black Bottom Stomp” do you hear?

BOB THIELE & G.D. WEISS

What a Wonderful World

- Listen to the tempo, instrumentation, and articulation of Louis Armstrong’s performance of “What a Wonderful World.” How do they help to create the feeling of the piece?
- Why do you think Louis Armstrong’s version of “What a Wonderful World” has lasted so long and become so well known?
- Listen to Jon Batiste’s performance of “What a Wonderful World.”
 - How do the tempo, instrumentation, and articulation compare to Louis Armstrong’s performance of “What a Wonderful World”?
 - What other musical choices do you notice?
 - How would you describe the feel of Jon Batiste’s performance compared to the Louis Armstrong version?
- Many, many artists have performed “What a Wonderful World” in different ways over the years. Listen to 3-5 versions of “What a Wonderful World.” Which do you like best? Why?
- The lyrics for “What a Wonderful World” are written in rhyming couplets. Write down all of the rhyming couplets from “What a Wonderful World.” How many are there? How many more can you create?
- What would be in your list of what makes a “wonderful world”?

IRVING BERLIN

Blue Skies

- Listen for form. Count how many times the melody repeats and when it changes.
- Listen for the beat in the bass and drums. Is the beat swung or straight?
- Tap your foot to the beat while you listen. Do the lyrics start on the beat or after the beat?
- Listen for expression. How does the vocalist convey emotion?
- Irving Berlin wrote “Blue Skies” in 1926 for a musical. Why do you think this song has been popular for nearly 100 years?
- The song “Blue Skies” has been used in many different types of media, including movies, television, and commercials. What are some other songs that have been used across different types of media? What musical elements do these songs have in common?

BILLY STRAYHORN

Take the A Train

- What instrument has the main solo? What instruments back up the solo?
- Listen for the bass. What words would you use to describe how the bass plays?
- The main theme in jazz is called the head. Listen for the head. How many times does it repeat during the piece?
- How would you describe the tempo? How would the feel of the piece change if the tempo was faster or slower?
- “Take the A Train” features a variety of solos. In what ways can a jazz musician use solos to bring their personality to a piece?
- “Take the A Train” was written about the ‘A’ train in New York City, the fastest way to get to the neighborhoods of Harlem and Sugar Hill where jazz and bebop flourished in the 1930s.
 - What neighborhoods in Pittsburgh inspire you? Why?
 - What are other pieces of music inspired by a neighborhood or a famous place?

JEFF TYZIK

Swing, Swing, Swing

Jeff Tyzik's piece "Swing, Swing, Swing" is inspired by Louis Prima's iconic "Sing, Sing, Sing," made famous by Benny Goodman. Listen to a Benny Goodman recording of "Sing, Sing, Sing" as you discuss the following:

- What is the first instrument you hear?
- Listen for short and long phrases. Draw the phrases in the air as you listen.
- Listen for call and response. Which instruments sound like they are asking questions? Which instruments sound like they are answering?
- Swing music is a form of dance music that was hugely popular in the 1930s and 1940s. Does this music make you want to dance? Why or why not?
- What music do you like to dance to? Why? What musical elements does that music have?

TRADITIONAL

When the Saints Go Marching In

- Listen for texture. What instruments do you hear playing at the same time? Are they playing the same thing (in unison) or different things at the same time?
- Listen for form. How many verses are there? Do the lyrics include a chorus? Can you find a pattern in the lyrics?
- Keep the beat with your foot. Notice the strong and weak beats. Do you think this is a good song for marching? Why or why not?
- What do you imagine when you listen to this piece?
- "When the Saints Go Marching In" is considered the unofficial anthem of New Orleans, the birthplace of jazz. Originally written as a slow hymn, the piece transformed into one of the most famous jazz standards with Louis Armstrong's interpretation of it in the 1930s. How does changing the musical interpretation of this song affect its meaning?