



2009 > 10 A WORLD OF MUSIC, DANCE, THEATRE & PERFORMANCE

2009 > 2010 Learning Link



Big Drum/Small World performed by **JazzReach**

Tuesday, October 20, 2009, 9:30am & 11:00am

Recommended Grades: K-6



JazzReach: Big Drum/Small World

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“Jazz has the ability to enrich and elevate [students] in ways that a lot of pop music doesn’t.”

--- H. Benjamin Schuman

Connecting to Curriculum and Students’ Lives!

History & Geography: Puerto Rico, Israel, Benin, India, New York

Arts: Jazz, musical instruments, indigenous music

What is it?

“This performance will mark the fourth collaboration between JazzReach and McCallum.” So reads the press release. Chances are good, therefore, that you’re already familiar with this advocate for jazz. If so, you’ll recall five musicians on piano, bass, alto and tenor saxophones, and drums. You’ll remember, too, those fascinating insights offered by group founder H. Benjamin Schuman. His personable --- and informed --- banter draws students into the world of a particular kind of music he is keen to share.

Like programs they’ve offered in the past (remember *Get Hip?*), *Big Drum/Small World* is all jazz all the time. But unlike, say, *Hangin’ With the Giants*, JazzReach’s paean to history’s great jazz practitioners, the program at hand is all about music being written today --- and the folks who

write it. Among these are Miguel Zenon of Puerto Rico, Rudresh Mahanthappa of India, Omer Ivatal of Israel, and Lionel Loueke of Benin. As you may have guessed, each musician brings to jazz the flavor, the culture, and the musical vernacular of his native art. This lively mix keeps our ears guessing. No settling into the routine, the oft-heard, here! A bit like a smoothie in which unexpected flavors, hard to identify at first, keep popping up, this program is also composed of piquant and rather fleeting video clips which open windows into the lives of these composers. Part biography, part musical provenance, these clips are as fun as they are informative.

Big World/Small Drum. Eye opening. Ear tickling. And live! As great experiences with the arts at the McCallum always are.



Who Is Responsible?

Suppose you loved something so much you were willing, even driven, to devote your life to sharing it with others. Maybe you already do this. You have some insight then into how H. Benjamin Schuman feels. Some time ago, this enterprising drummer sold the piano his grandmother, dying, left him, and with the proceeds got a logo, an address, and a business name. He was bent on building an organization that could bring jazz to youngsters. A bold act, if you ask us. Well, this visionary labored in the wilderness, so to speak, for five years, with just his logo and an unyielding zeal for writing letters and applying for grants. At last, something happened. The ASCAP Foundation came through with a \$5,000 grant. JazzReach was born! Right away it swung into action with its first presentation, *Get Hip*. Perhaps you even recall that show from a few seasons ago? Here's the recipe: add multimedia elements to one jazz quintet, stir in Schuman's pithy instruction, and voila! You have a kid-friendly entry into that most American of music genres: jazz.

Schuman himself, a native of Lansing, Michigan, first began to thump a drumhead when he was all of thirteen. In those heady days a high school education included thorough musical training, and he availed himself of the opportunity. After a stint at Berklee College of Music, he entered into a career as a working musician. The rest of his story you know.

Another member of the Metta Quintet is Marcus Strickland. He plays tenor sax. He also has his own eponymous quartet. Then, there's Helen Sung on piano. She seemed firmly set on a path to becoming a classical musician when fate intervened. She won a coveted seat in a small, elite ensemble at the New England Conservatory. The music? Jazz. She's been hooked ever since. And on bass, we have Joshua Ginsburg, as well as Jaleel Shaw on alto sax. These two highly sought-after artists complete the quintet.

We'd better consider the composers, too. After all, their contributions are front and center. From Puerto Rico, we have Miguel Zenon. He also went to Berklee, and while there was drafted into making jazz. This remarkable young man has been awarded the "Genius Grant" (oh to be able to say that!!) from the McArthur Foundation. Then, there's Rudresh Mahanthappa, whose Indian background informs his jazz foreground. He's a Guggenheim fellow, by the way. Bassist Omer Avital of Tel Aviv was playing professionally by age seventeen. And West African Lionel Loueke (from Benin) at seventeen had a momentous encounter with his older brother's guitar. He hasn't been the same since. His wild musical journey has led him through the Ivory Coast, Paris, and the U.S.

“A jazz ensemble functions like a community...the music is a metaphor for promoting values...participation and interaction within a community.”

--- H. Benjamin Schuman

At the Root of It All

For the denizens of Benin, drums provide the soundtrack to their lives. Whether they celebrate a birth, lament a passing, or turn worshipful thoughts towards ancestors, the Fonin people function to the constant accompaniment of drumming. Such an ancient culture certainly has its traditions; chief among these is the praising of illustrious forebears and sacred deities. Such praise takes the form of --- you guessed it --- drumming. Drums across whose heads skins are tautly stretched are

made to “talk.” That is, the rhythms and cadences of speech are reproduced in the percussive play on the drum. Of course, music in Benin is not confined to drums alone. In the days following independence, music flourished in this West African country. Innovation prevailed. Traditional styles of music were mixed with French and Congolese musical vernaculars, as well as American rock, funk and soul. Beninese guitarist Lionel Loueke, whose composition is featured in *Big Drum/Small World*, is the pride of his country today.

Israel is a young country, of course, but Jewish tradition stretches back in time. Is it any wonder then that the national music of Israel seems such a mix of old and new? For a number of years Israeli musicians have been tinkering with style. How to establish a distinctive national music? How to give musical definition to the emergent nation? In recent decades, music in this Middle Eastern country has developed exponentially, sparking out in many directions: jazz, rock, and folk, for example. Yet Hassidic and klezmer tunes as well as the distinctive instruments associated with them, continue to echo even in the most contemporary tunes.

Speaking of India as a kind of monolith is as off track as lumping the swamps of Mississippi with the avenues of New York. India is many cultures, regions, languages, and dialects. Each comes clothed in its own very distinct tradition. Indeed, India is huge, and its various cultures go back many millennia. There is, however, a consensus when it comes to the importance of music in daily life. Regardless of which corner of India you explore, Indian classical music helps define culture, entertains (in some cases, relieves from grinding poverty), and stimulates spiritual inspiration.

Music may well be Puerto Rico’s biggest export to the U.S. (Ricky Martin anyone?) On the island itself, music is imbued with rich traditions. Consider some of the instruments. The *guiro*, a hollowed out gourd, is a festive holdover from Pre-Columbian times. The guitar, on the other hand, arrived on these shores courtesy of Spain. The *cuatro* may be the most popular of the various Puerto Rican guitars. It’s considered the national instrument. Hewn from resonant Laurel wood, this innovation of the 1800s features ten strings. Then there’s the tambour --- a tree trunk hollowed out and covered with an animal skin. Another percussive instrument, with which we stateside are probably more familiar, is the maracas. And not forgetting the omnipresent drums, we should add that many of these come from Africa, brought over during the wretched days of slave trading and played by slaves.

To get ready for the performance, students might research these:

- Jazz
- India
- Puerto Rico

Here's a 60 Minute Lesson You Could Teach to Prepare Students for this Work

Line of Inquiry* *How does JazzReach in Big Drum/Small World sift indigenous music from various cultures through the sieve of jazz to serve up a mix of our communalities and differences?*

(*A line of inquiry is a question that generates a lesson.)

Have students fold a sheet of unlined paper into four squares. Crayons and pencils at the ready.

Play a selection of music from India. (Suggestion: YouTube clip
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L72acCBF0as>)

Teachers instruct students: "In square 1, write down as many words as you can think of to describe this music."

Ask for several students to quickly share aloud some of their describing words.

Teachers Ask Students: How is this music different-sounding from other music you have heard?

Play a selection of music from Puerto Rico. (YouTube historical clip:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ulwOHH>)

Teachers instruct students: "Draw a scene in square 2 that this music suggests to you. Or else fill the square with the colors that this piece makes you think of."

Play a selection of Benin music. (YouTube contemporary clip:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uHgx2nOn0bw>)

Teachers instruct students: "Write sentences in square 3 which compare & contrast this music with the other types of music we've just heard."

Teachers Ask students: "Who noticed a way in which this music is different from the others & would like to share that difference aloud with the class?"

Play a jazz selection. (Possible: Brubeck Quartet on YouTube
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2htbaJFEAXQ>)

Teachers Ask students: "Where do you think this music comes from?"

Teachers share this information with the students: "From the United States. Jazz comes to us originally from the American South, especially New Orleans and Charleston. Later, NYC was an important center for jazz. Many different players got together there and mixed their styles. JazzReach in *Big Drum/Small World* is also mixing things.

What questions would you (the students) like to ask JazzReach about the music they make? Put these questions into square 4."

Students share their sheets with one other student.

Teachers Ask students: "What are some interesting things you discovered by looking at your partner's sheet?"

After coming to the performance, students could research these:

- Israel
- Benin
- JazzReach

**Here's a 45-60 Minute Lesson You Could Teach
After Students have Experienced the Work**

Facilitate a discussion of the performance.

****This part of the lesson can be used if students have done the pre-show lesson on page 5.**

Teachers Ask students: "We listened to some music before the performance. Who remembers what music? When in the performance did we hear something like that?"

Teachers Direct Students: "Write a letter to an imaginary pen pal. Choose what country they live in. Include in this letter these things:

- Name and describe the kind of music you like to listen to. What's American about it, if it's American music of some sort?
- Tell your pen pal about your experiences at the McCallum Theatre.
- Write one thing you learned about music by going to this performance."

"Every time we visit Palm Desert, McCallum always packs the house with students! It is a true testament to McCallum and the community's commitment to ensuring that their young people are culturally well rounded, informed, aware, and engaged."

--- H. Benjamin Schuman

What do YOU think?

How would you answer these questions --- and how could these questions be adapted for student use?

- Which moments do you recall most indelibly, and why?
- How were the players communicating with each other?
- Were you ever able to hear something that struck you as improvisational? What made it seem that way? How would you characterize those moments in which improvisation does NOT seem to be happening?
- What did you notice about how the 5 different instruments interacted --- and what new awareness of music did this bring you?
- What was the order of the program (what came first, second, etc.) and how was this structure effective?
- How is the audience an active participant in this performance?
- What methods of education were used by the performers?
- Which musical elements seemed to belong to the world of jazz? To indigenous music?
- How is this version of jazz different from other sorts of jazz?
- If the performers were showman-like, what did they do that conveyed this?
- How did the spatial arrangement of the players appear to affect their playing?
- What effect do you think the audience had on the players?
- If you had to describe the sounds of their instruments in terms of color(s), what words would you use?
- How would you describe their playing?
- How is this format a good one for instructing? For entertaining?
- How was this performance targeted to student age range?

Internet

Super jazz site

www.pbs.org/jazz/

This PBS site offers fun, informative info in connection with Ken Burn's acclaimed documentary. A special section called JazzKids is designed just for students.

History of jazz

meltingpot.fortunecity.com/zaire/721/historyframe.htm

Depth and breadth of history. A click helps you skip the ads at this otherwise sterling site.

Scholastic to the rescue!

teacher.scholastic.com/activities/bhistory/history_of_jazz.htm

A wonderful resource specifically for teachers.

Our state department introduces us to Benin

www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/6761.htm

Info Please on Israel

www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0107652.html

Puerto Rico in detail

www.topuertorico.org/

A tourism site that nevertheless offers substantial info on geography, history, and culture.

India!

<http://india.gov.in/knowindia/kids.php>

A super cool site from the Indian government created just for youngsters.

Books

Jazz

By: Walter Dean Myers

Reading level: Ages 4-8

Publisher: Holiday House (August 2008)

ISBN-10: 0823421732

Let's Make Music: An Interactive Musical Trip Around the World

By: Jessica Baron Turner

Reading level: Ages 4-8

Publisher: Hal Leonard Corporation (March 1, 1995)

ISBN-10: 0793540577

This unique book/audio package lets children sing and play songs from around the world by making their own musical instruments.

This Jazz Man

By: Karen Ehrhardt

Reading level: Ages 4-8

Publisher: Harcourt Children's Books (November 1, 2006)

ISBN-10: 0152053077

Using a lively version of the children's song This Old Man, this book introduces famous African-American jazz musicians as it counts to nine.

The Sound That Jazz Makes

By: Carole Boston Weatherford

Reading level: Ages 4-8

Publisher: Walker Books for Young Readers (January 1, 2001)

ISBN-10: 0802776744

Molding her rhymed text to the rhythms and cadences of "This Is the House That Jack Built," Weatherford distills an entire course in music history, tracing the roots of jazz back to its origins in Africa and up to its current incarnation in rap and hip hop.

The Kingdom of Benin in West Africa

By: Heather Millar

Reading level: Ages 9-12

Publisher: Benchmark Books (NY) (February 1996)

ISBN-10: 0761400885

This title is out of print but available used at Amazon.com.

This Is Israel

By: Miroslav Sasek

Reading level: Ages 4-8

Publisher: Universe; illustrated edition edition (January 29, 2008)

ISBN-10: 0789315955

Part of a classic series on countries of the world.

Welcome to Israel

By: Lilly Rivlin

Reading level: Ages 9-12

Publisher: Behrman House (May 2000)

ISBN-10: 0874416922

Puerto Rico: The Land

By: Errin Banting

Reading level: Ages 9-12

Publisher: Crabtree Publishing Company (March 2003)

ISBN-10: 0778797015

Shake It, Morena: And Other Folklore From Puerto Rico

By: Carmen T. Bernier-Grand

Reading level: Ages 4-8

Publisher: Millbrook Press; Bilingual edition (December 26, 2006)

ISBN-10: 0822570262

This collection features games, counting rhymes, and riddles as well as familiar children's songs from the author's native Puerto Rico.

India: The Land

By: Bobbie Kalman

Reading level: Ages 9-12

Publisher: Crabtree Publishing Company; Revised edition (January 2001)

ISBN-10: 077879749X

**Classic Jazz: Jazz Greats**

Release Date: October 7, 2003

Label: Time/Life Music

UPC: 610583017526

*Brubeck, Fitzgerald, Hampton, etc.***Yoruba Drums From Benin**

Release Date: March 1, 1996

Label: Smithsonian Folkways

UPC: 0093074044025

Music From Puerto Rico, 1929-1947

Release Date: November 3, 1992

Label: Harlequin Records (UK)

UPC: 008637202224

Traditional Music of India

Release Date: April 11, 1995

Label: Prestige Records

UPC: 025218515726

Israel: Anthology of Israeli Music

Release Date: November 7, 2005

Label: Anthology Of World Music

UPC: 8717423014881

“Our mission is to make jazz accessible.”

--- H. Benjamin Schuman