

BOBBY RODRIGUEZ'S

Jazz Adventure

Art Form: Music

Style: Jazz

Culture: American, Latin

MEET THE ARTIST:

Founded by Italian drummer Paolo Nonnis and currently under the leadership and direction of Grammy-nominated musician and native Los Angeleno **Dr. Bobby Rodriguez**, *Jazz Adventure* features a roster of seasoned professional musicians who have performed together throughout the southern California area. Their combined professional credits read like a listing from "Who's Who in Music," and include performance and recording work with such legends as Quincy Jones, Ray Charles, Herbie Hancock, Poncho Sanchez, Bo Diddley, Ike and Tina Turner, Louie Bellson and others. These dedicated and talented performers are deeply committed to the task of expanding the musical experience of children. They abide by the words spoken to Dr. Rodriguez by his mentors, who told him to "be professional and keep learning!" Dr. Rodriguez is himself a mentor and teaches at the Los Angeles County High School for the Arts, and performs with the Clayton Hamilton Jazz Orchestra.

ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE:

Opening with a rousing riff from "When the Saints Go Marching In," *Bobby Rodriguez's Jazz Adventure* leads students through an examination of one of the most significant musical inventions of the 20th century - jazz. Musical samples include blues, Dixieland, swing, be-bop, jazz rock and Latin jazz. The program also provides background and historical information about the origin and development of jazz in New Orleans; the birth of the blues; jazz legends like Louis Armstrong and Charlie Parker; the big band era and band leaders such as Gene Krupa and Benny Goodman; and introductions to rhythmic patterns and improvisational styles. The following instruments will be demonstrated: drums, saxophone, flute, clarinet, bass, piano, trumpet, flugelhorn, electric instruments and Latin percussion. *Jazz Adventure* also shows how rock rhythms and jazz improvisations created a hybrid style called jazz rock. A brief history of Latin jazz culminates in hands-on audience participation, which ends with a literal "bang!"



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PREPARING FOR THE EXPERIENCE:

Jazz is the foundation of what we call American music and has influenced almost every type of popular music since its creation. It is about rhythm, melody, harmony, personality, style and improvisation. As a musical language, jazz is one of the first indigenous American styles to affect music in the rest of the world. Developed in New Orleans, Louisiana near the turn of the 20th century, jazz was created from a melting pot of cultures and experiences. The influence of African-Americans is at the core of its revolutionary musical sound. Birthed from the blues, jazz incorporated ideas and aesthetic values from Africa, the Caribbean and Europe but was clearly independent of those musical styles. In the early 1920s, New Orleans musicians like King Oliver and his Creole Jazz Band found their way north with an exuberant style of improvised music. This soulful and intellectual music was expanded by skilled musicians whose personalized sound gave American music a new vibrancy and created icons like Louis Armstrong, who is credited with influencing American music like no other musician of the 20th century. This is when jazz started to gain in popularity in the big cities like New York and Chicago, and later throughout the rest of the country, largely because of the development of phonograph recordings.



Early jazz was dance music, just like disco, house, pop and hip-hop are today. But this music was not just for young people; all of America was starting to find new life in jazz. Over that last 100 years, jazz has developed many branches of styles: ragtime, stride, swing, be-bop, cool, straight ahead, free, Latin-jazz and others. It has evolved to include dance music and what might be labeled as art music. Jazz is a powerful expression of humanity and freedom.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- What was your favorite instrument played by Jazz Adventure? What about its shape and sound attracted you?
- How many terms and musical styles can you remember from the performance? Define them.
- What does it mean to improvise? How do you improvise in your daily life?
- How did the musicians use their personality in their playing?
- Describe how jazz could be considered to be a type of language.

FRAMEWORK FOCUS -SOCIAL STUDIES:

New Orleans, Louisiana has long been a melting pot of many cultures, even before it joined the United States through the Louisiana Purchase in 1803. It is the birth place of jazz music, but many types of music, cuisine, languages and cultures can be found there.

Create a timeline, oral report, essay or web page about the people of New Orleans. Divide the class into four groups. Three groups will research one of the following:

African Americans (slaves and free persons)
Acadians (Cajuns)
Creoles*

Include general history (country of origin, migration route, language, etc.) and how the groups contributed to the magical culture of New Orleans. Research types of music and dances that were popular with each group: Blues/Jazz; Cajun music (two-step, waltz), Zydeco music.

The fourth group will research the city of New Orleans: location, climate, famous landmarks, industry, traditions, history and famous people who came from or whose work was strongly influenced by New Orleans (e.g., Emeril Lagasse, Ann Rice, Louis Armstrong, Tennessee Williams, Jelly Roll Morton, and Wynton Marsalis). Make a presentation as a class when the research is complete.

*There may be some confusion concerning the correct definition of Cajun and Creole; this is part of the research.

Legend:

- 🎨 Artistic perception
- ❖ Creative expression
- ▶ Historical & cultural context
- ⇒ Aesthetic valuing
- * Connections, Relations, Applications

ACTIVITIES TO ENHANCE THE EXPERIENCE:

- 🎨 Write an essay about the relationship between music and freedom. How does music help us to express our thoughts and feelings? What kind of music makes you feel free?
- ❖ Make up (improvise) a new way of doing something in your everyday life.
Walking Speaking
Moving Writing Eating

Share it with your classmates.

⇒ Someone said, "It's not the song, but the way it is played, that makes music into jazz." Discuss this statement and give examples.

🎨 Rhythm and syncopation are important elements in jazz. To help students understand how accents create a jazz feeling in music, divide the class into two groups. One group should clap the basic beat lightly, one - two - three - four, repeating it over and over. The clapping should not be too fast or too loud. Once the basic beat is established, the second group can tap pencils lightly on beat one, putting the accent on the strongest beat.

This creates a march rhythm. Then tap the pencils on beats two and four to feel the syncopated off beat.



🎨 Have students select one style of jazz: ragtime, big band, blues, Dixieland, fusion, funk, Latin, progressive, be-bop or swing and investigate the music. Bring in an example of each style and listen, discuss and compare.

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