## Improvising with The Blues

### Lesson 3

#### Grade 7 Music

### Critical Learning

- What improvisation is.
- How improvisation is used in music.

### Guiding Questions

- Do you feel the same way about improvisation when you're listening as you do when you're performing?

### Curriculum Expectations

#### Creating and Performing

**C1.** apply the creative process to create and perform music for a variety of purposes, using the elements and techniques of music

- **1.1** sing and/or play, in tune, from musical notation, unison music in two or more parts from diverse cultures, styles, and historical periods
- **1.2** apply the elements of music when singing and/or playing, composing, and arranging music, using them for specific effects and clear purposes
- **1.4** demonstrate an understanding of standard and other musical notation through performance and composition

#### Reflecting, Responding, and Analysing

**C2.** apply the critical analysis process to communicate their feelings, ideas, and understandings in response to a variety of music and musical experiences

- **2.1** express analytical personal responses to musical performances in a variety of ways
- **2.2** analyse using musical technology, ways in which the elements are used in the music that they perform, listen to, and create

### Learning Goals

(Unpacked Expectations)

- Analyze how rhythm is used when listening to Jazz.
- Improvise by making some choices about the rhythms and the notes.
- Use some Jazz rhythms and articulation in improvising.
- Self-assess progress towards the learning goals.
- Respond to music, making personal connections, organizing ideas, and expressing clearly.

### Instructional Components

#### Readiness

- ability to perform at least the first five notes of the major scale
- basic understanding of written notation
- experience with Call and Response
- understanding of elements of music (form, pitch, rhythm, articulation)
- understanding of pentatonic scale
- ability to identify I IV and V of a scale (Lessons 1, 2)
- ability to identify a connection between rhythm and lyrics/words
- ability to sing and/or play the Accompaniment (Lessons 1, 2)
- basic understanding of simple rhythms
- ability to recognize the 12-bar Blues chordal progression

#### Terminology

- accompaniment (the 12-bar Blues harmonic progression using the root of chord)
- Creative Process: Planning and Focusing
- improvise (improvisation)
- Jazz rhythm
- lyrics
- major scale
- manuscript paper
- melody
- pentatonic scale
- pitch
- rhythm
- root note of a chord
- scale
- swing beat
- 12-bar Blues

#### Materials

- Card for Planning and Focusing to post on the Creative Process model
- 12-bar Blues **Word Wall** cards with terms, definitions, symbols, and examples
- Blues scale for various instrumentations
- Jazz rhythms to post in the room
- Remaining creative process stages for posting
- A piece of bread, a peach, a spoon, a plate, and bowl
- **Reflection Log** Self-Assessment Checklist
- **Reflection Log** Reflection Questions
**Improvising with The Blues**  Lesson 3

**Minds On**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Whole Class</th>
<th>Introducing Improvisation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Write the word ‘improvisation’ on the board. Display a piece of bread, a peach, a spoon, a plate, and a bowl. Ask: “How can I improvise with what I have to make a jam sandwich?” Students make suggestions and make the sandwich. Assign small groups another scenario for which they suggest an improvisation strategy, e.g., how to brush their teeth without a toothbrush. Check for understanding, e.g., using Traffic Light.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Play an audio or video example of The Blues to demonstrate improvisation. (See Resource List.) Pose questions to focus listening. In pairs, students decide on one important point to describe improvisation. List their ideas.

Note that rhythm is a fundamental element of improvisation. Ask: “How is the element of rhythm used in the improvisation we just listened to?” Tell students that they are going to work with some Jazz rhythms and begin thinking about the melody they want to create for their lyrics.

To clarify the expectations for performance model Levels 1, 2, 3 and 4 performances in rhythm and improvisation. For Levels 1, 2, and 3, suggest a next step for working towards the next level. (See Performance Rubric)

**Action!**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Whole Class</th>
<th>Experimenting with Improvisation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Post examples of Jazz rhythms, each equal to one bar in 4/4 time. As a warm-up, students sing and/or play the notes on The Blues Scale handout using whole notes, half notes, and quarter notes. The Blues Scale differs slightly from the first 5 notes of the scale and will include 3 new notes. Use the Observation Checklist: Lessons 2 and 3 to assess students’ readiness to proceed.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Use rhythmic activities, e.g., echo clapping, body percussion, and instrumental echoing, to explore the Jazz rhythms and teach stylistic nuances. Model the rhythms, using one note with appropriate articulation, e.g., staccato, tenuto, slurs, accents, short accents. Students echo back. Model and echo using two notes then three notes. Refer to the Creative Process (See The Arts, Grades 1-8, 2009, pp. 19-22.) model and collaboratively decide which part of this process the activity reflects and why.

Tell students that because Jazz rhythms are equal to one bar in 4/4 time, they need to explore ways to combine the Jazz rhythms. Prompt exploration of rhythm and note combinations by asking questions: “Which rhythms can you combine? Which rhythms seem to work well together?” Students experiment with the rhythms and 3 notes to see what works for them. Allow for individual and partner exploration. Students can experiment with their lyrics during this process. Play the accompaniment while students explore their ideas.

Explain that they are in the Planning and Focusing stage of the Creative Process. Add this section to the Creative Process model.

**Consolidation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Whole Group</th>
<th>Creating a 12-Bar Blues Share One–Get One</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Give each student a large card with a term, definition, symbol, or example on it. Students form groups with others holding the cards related to their own. Discuss groupings and shift students to another card group, if necessary. Post headings, e.g., Elements of Music or Musicianship and groups post their card clusters. Refer to and add to the word wall throughout the unit.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Whole Group</th>
<th>Reflection and Self-Assessment</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facilitate a discussion of the role of structure in music so that students understand what is meant by structure. Students use the Reflection Log Self-Assessment Checklist to reflect on their learning. Students also respond to the Lesson 3 prompts in the Reflection Log Reflection Questions. Show the Reflection Rubric and model a sample response to #1. Remind students that this reflection is part of the Reflecting and Evaluating stage of the Creative Process. Collect Response Logs.</td>
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</table>

**Pause and Ponder**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QuickTip</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Check for understanding at critical points in the learning, e.g., during discussion of Jazz rhythms, articulation, and structure.</td>
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</table>

**QuickTip**

Possible answers include: repetition, uneven pulse, importance of rests/silences.

**QuickTip**

(1) If singing with students, use scat to introduce the Jazz rhythms and Blues scale. (2) The accompaniment can be a recorded example or be sung and/or played by a teacher/student on guitar/piano, or by sections of the class.

**AOL Assessment Checkpoint**

Ensure that students are (1) improvising and (2) able to play at least 3 notes of The Blues scale before moving forward.

Use a small number of notes when beginning to improvise in order to build confidence.

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Traffic Light
See Differentiated Instruction Assessment Cards, Assessment, Evaluation and Reporting. Develop this strategy as a classroom routine to obtain information about understanding immediately and efficiently from students.

Student responses in class can inform instructional decisions (assessment for learning), e.g., whether or not to move to the next learning activity or whether to provide a small group of students with guided practice. See the Strategy Implementation Guide.

Questions to focus listening
• What instruments do you hear?
• Which instruments are improvising? How do you know?
• Would you call this music improvisation or memorization?
• Is there a difference between improvisation and memorization? Why do you think so?

See Think Literacy Subject-Specific Examples: Music, Grades 11-12, pp. 22-25, Generating Ideas: Rapid Writing.
**Jazz Rhythms**

Jazz Rhythms are all one bar rhythms in 4/4 time and are meant to be played with a swing beat. Display them, in musical notation, on an anchor chart and use two or three in warm-ups. Add additional Jazz rhythms to give students some options when composing – these should be posted in musical notation.

1. \[\text{\begin{tabular}{c}
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2. \[\text{\begin{tabular}{c}
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3. \[\text{\begin{tabular}{c}
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4. \[\text{\begin{tabular}{c}
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5. \[\text{\begin{tabular}{c}
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6. \[\text{\begin{tabular}{c}
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**Blues Scale**

For a definition, see p. 175 of the Glossary, 2009.

Blues scales vary depending on instrumentation. See the following pdfs:

- Blues scale – Vocal, Record
- Blues scale – Guitar in G
- Blues scale – Strings in D
- Full band blues scale in concert B
- Parts blues scale in B flat concert

**Assessment for Learning Checkpoint**

Metaphorically, checkpoints occur at borders, where successful passing of an inspection or examination allows one to cross into a new territory. Similarly, at Assessment Checkpoints, teachers ascertain whether students have achieved the necessary standard of knowledge and/or skills to proceed to the next part of the learning journey, the destination of which is success on the final evaluation.

Assessment Checkpoints are examples of Assessment for Learning. “Assessment for learning is the process of seeking and interpreting evidence for use by learners and their teachers to decide where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go, and how best to get there.” (Assessment Reform Group, 2002, p. 2, quoted in Growing Success, p. 32).

Assessment Checkpoints should inform instruction, indicate which students need additional practice and support.

**Staccato, tenuto, slurs, accents, short accents**


**Scat**

Scat is a vocal improvisation using random syllables rather than words. Scat singing enables singers to sing improvised melodies and rhythms that sometimes have an instrumental sound or feel.
**Model**

Modelling is a component of explicit instruction that is particularly helpful for struggling learners. According to the gradual release of responsibility model for instruction, modelling is done by the teacher as students observe (I do, you watch). This is followed by shared practice (I do, you help) and guided practice (you do, peers help), and finally independent practice (you do, I help, if necessary). See the **Strategy Implementation Continuum** for a detailed chart of this framework.

**Success Criteria**

Co-creation of rubrics and analysis of exemplars contribute to transparency and building shared understanding of criteria and standards. This work also supports development of peer and self-assessment skills. See **Differentiated Instruction Cards**, **Identifying Success Criteria** and **Sharing and Clarifying Success Criteria**.

**Feedback**

“As part of assessment for learning, teachers provide students with descriptive feedback and coaching for improvement. Teachers engage in assessment as learning by helping all students develop their capacity to be independent, autonomous learners who are able to set individual goals, monitor their own progress, determine next steps, and reflect on their thinking and learning.” *(Growing Success, 2010, p. 28)*

**Word Wall**

A word wall is an organized array of words important to the topic being studied. To be effective, word walls must be visible, accessible, selective, incremental, adding only 5—7 words at a time explicitly taught.

A word wall can serve as:
- a focus for vocabulary building
- a scaffold for conversation and reading and writing activities
- a visual map to show relationships among words.

Teachers need to incorporate words regularly into instruction, cue students to use the word wall, and integrate the word wall into vocabulary building activities. In other words, the word wall is interactive, more than a display. It is possible to maximize this aspect of word walls by creating laminated word cards that can be moved around, removed and used.

**Share One-Get One**

Share One-Get One is a low-risk activity that can be used to review terminology and energize students in a short time period. Prepare cards with terms or symbols on one side and informal explanations on the other. Each student draws 1 card. On a signal, students mingle and on a second signal, meet a partner. One student asks the other the term, the partner responds. The first student either confirms or provides the answer. Partners reverse roles and then exchange cards. Repeat.
# I’ve Got The Blues!

**Reflection Rubric: 12-bar Blues**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Achievement Category</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
<th>Level 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Use of critical/creative thinking processes</strong></td>
<td>Reflects on growth as a composer, performer, and audience member with respect to • achievement of learning goals • changes in self</td>
<td>Reflects on personal growth as a composer, performer and audience member with limited thoughtfulness</td>
<td>Reflects on personal growth as a composer, performer and audience member with some thoughtfulness</td>
<td>Reflects on personal growth as a composer, performer and audience member with considerable thoughtfulness</td>
<td>Reflects on personal growth as a composer, performer and audience member with a high degree of insight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Use of critical/creative thinking processes</strong></td>
<td>Creation of a melodic line in 12-bar Blues Supports reflection with relevant • personal connections, e.g., feelings, experiences • examples • reasons</td>
<td>Gives limited relevant personal connections, examples and reasons</td>
<td>Gives somewhat relevant personal connections, examples and reasons</td>
<td>Gives considerably relevant personal connections, examples and reasons</td>
<td>Gives highly relevant personal connections, examples and reasons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communication</strong></td>
<td>Expresses and organizes ideas clearly and logically</td>
<td>Expresses and organizes ideas with limited clarity and logic</td>
<td>Expresses and organizes ideas with some clarity and logic</td>
<td>Expresses and organizes ideas with considerable clarity and logic</td>
<td>Expresses and organizes ideas with a high degree of clarity and logic</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Successes:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Next Steps:</strong></td>
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# I’ve Got The Blues!

## Observation Checklist

Assessment Checkpoint Lessons 2 & 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Is sufficiently comfortable with the accompaniment</th>
<th>Can play and/or sing at least 3 notes of The Blues scale</th>
<th>Is improvising</th>
<th>Feedback provided</th>
<th>Date</th>
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</table>
Blues Scale

Vocal, Soprano Recorder, Orff
Blues Scale

[Composer]

Guitar

[Music notation for the Blues Scale]
Blues Scale
For Strings

[Composer]
[Arranger]
Blues Scale
Flute

Blues Scale

Trumpet/clarinet

Blues Scale

Alto Sax.

Blues Scale

Horn in F

Blues Scale
I’ve Got The Blues!

Reflection Log
Self-Assessment Checklist

Name: __________________________

• Indicate progress with a coloured sticky dot (beginning - red; approaching - yellow; achieving - green).
• Update progress on learning goals throughout the unit.

When you have completed this log, hand it in to your teacher.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson</th>
<th>Learning Goals</th>
<th>Progress Dots</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I can identify/sing and/or play a rhythm.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I can write my own lyrics in an AAB form.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I am playing/singing my notes accurately.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I can identify scale degrees I IV and V and play them in the context of the blues progression.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>I can play/sing the first 5 notes of the major scale.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I can identify/sing and/or play I IV V in a scale.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I can improvise using 3 notes with a Jazz rhythm.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I have explored various rhythms in my improvisations.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>I am beginning to use articulation that is stylistically appropriate to the Blues form.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4-7</td>
<td>I have tried improvising using all the notes of the Blues scale.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I know the 12-bar Blues form. Write form in Roman numerals on the line.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>__________________________________________</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I know the notes (I, IV, V) on my instrument in 12-bar Blues form. Write form in note names for your instrument on the line.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>__________________________________________</td>
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<td></td>
<td>I wrote 2 bars of melody and it was checked by ____________________________ (partner).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>I wrote 8 bars of melody and it was checked by ____________________________ (partner).</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I wrote 12 bars of melody and it was checked by ____________________________ (teacher).</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Lesson 3: Improvising with the Blues

1. What are your initial impressions of improvisation in the Blues? Describe your personal thoughts as both a listener and performer.
   - Write complete sentences.
   - Make personal connections.
   - Include descriptive detail and examples.
   - Give reasons for your impressions.

   - As a listener, I think...

   - As a performer, I think...

2. How does structure affect music?
   - Use point form
   - Support your thinking with examples.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ways structure affects music</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>