

Study Guide for "Café Improv"

VOCABULARY:

- **acoustic** -- not using electricity.
- **acoustics** -- The science of sound. Musical acoustics distinguishes between tones and noises. A tone of sustained and equal pitch is generated by regular and constant vibrations of the air, these being generated by similar vibrations in the tone-producing body; whereas a noise is caused by irregular and fluctuating vibrations.
- **bow** -- a wooden stick, with horsehair on one side, that is used to play a string instrument.
- **composer** -- someone who writes music.
- **electronic** -- using electricity.
- **improvise** -- to come up with original ideas as solutions to problems. In music, it means that, following certain rules, you "make it up as you go."
- **improvisation** -- when musicians come up with their own ideas during the performance of a piece of music.
- **jazz** -- a musical conversation between musicians and the listener. It is music that uses improvisation as the language with which the musicians communicate with each other.
- **pizzicato** -- plucking a string with the finger. The name comes from an Italian word meaning "pinched."
- **reed** -- a tall swamp grass with jointed, hollow stalks. It also can mean a flexible strip of cane or metal used as a mouthpiece for a wind instrument.
- **strum** -- when several strings on a string instrument are played at once (like a guitar is played).
- **transverse** -- played to the side (how a flute is played).

Suggested Pre-Workshop Activities

- Locate several states &/or cities that were important during the development of jazz music (New Orleans, Chicago, New York City, Detroit, Los Angeles).
- What are the four instrument families? (string, woodwind, percussion, brass) How do the instruments in each family sound? How are they played? How is the sound made?
- What are the elements of music? (rhythm, harmony, melody & form) Why is each important? Can you do each one? Clap your hands, stomp your feet, talk or sing to your friend, both of you talk or sing at once -- those are the elements of music!
- Develop your listening skills. Name your five senses (sight, sound, taste, smell, touch). Why is it important to be very quiet when you listen to music? (so you can "listen" to it, not just "hear" it) How many of your senses does music affect? (sight, hearing, & sometimes touch)
- Do a listening experiment. Ask your class to sit very "quietly" for a minute or so, and then have them identify all the different sounds in the room (clocks ticking, horns blaring, feet rustling, someone sneezing, breathing, etc.). Listen again for another minute or two. Do the sounds get louder? Do you hear even more sounds? Can you "tune out" some noises and focus on others?

Suggested Follow-up Discussion and Activities:

- What family of instruments is a cello in? Flute? Guitar? Drums? How does each instrument make their sound?
- As a class, choose someone famous or someone that has influenced your life and write a piece of music for them. Is this person sad? happy? did they make you feel happy or not?
- What countries were involved in the development of jazz? Why is jazz called "America's music?"