



ROYAL
COLLEGE
OF MUSIC
London



RCM Sparks Prove You Groove

RCM Sparks is the Royal College of Music's learning and participation programme.
To find out more and get involved visit www.rcm.ac.uk/sparks

Welcome to the 'Prove you Groove' activity scheme of work, to accompany the filmed performance of the RCM Sparks Big Band concert, presented by RCM Jazz Professor Mark Armstrong.

The pack highlights the popular 12 bar blues chord sequence which many Jazz standards and songs are based upon, including the title song 'Prove you Groove'. Download the accompanying audio tracks and get creative by using the pack as your guide. Enjoy exploring the different elements of Jazz which are highlighted in this resource.

Listen

Listen to the song 'Prove You Groove'.

Explore

Discuss how music can be divided into 4 basic building blocks: TIME, PITCH/HARMONY, TEXTURE and FORM.

1. Time:

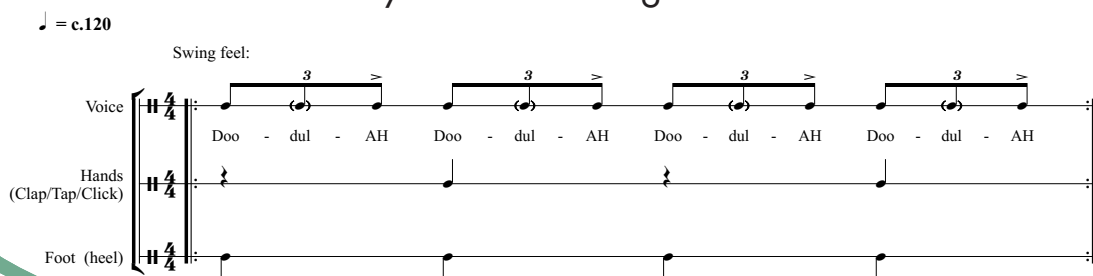
Jazz is a dance music that needs an energetic, insistent pulse, commonly described as a "groove". The RHYTHM SECTION is primarily responsible for setting this up, though it should be felt and expressed by all members of the band. Syncopation adds energy by creating rhythms that sit in between the main beats.

Demonstrate the following exercises and get the students to join in. Follow this with call-and-response exercises with the students.

Rhythm Exercises: grooves

♩ = c.120

Swing feel:



Voice

Hands (Clap/Tap/Click)

Foot (heel)

Straight feel (Rock/Latin):

Voice
Chi - KA Chi - KA Chi - KA Chi - KA

Hands

Foot

2. Pitch/Harmony

- (i) One strong characteristic of jazz is the use of specific scale types, especially the blues sound, which mixes together the "happy/sad" of major and minor:

2 blues scales for improvising over the 12-bar blues in F: the sweet "Down a minor 3rd" one & the home-key, "Dirty" one.

"Sweet"
D min blues scale

"Dirty"
F min blues scale

N.B. A is maj. 3rd of F, so be careful on chord IV (B) where A is a safer bet...

Prove You Groove uses a mixture of both of these sounds.

- (ii) The harmony is derived from the 12 bar Blues which uses the three primary chords, I, IV and V. This chord sequence is common in jazz and also early pop music.

3. Texture

The piece uses "call-and-response" which means there is space for a conversation between the singers and the players. After each sung phrase there is room for the player to respond with an improvised answer. Call-and-response has its origins in African drumming and singing and is an important way of organising sound in much classical music as well.

4. Form

The piece uses a combination of twelve bar blues and AABA form. The A sections are three different verses with a contrasting "Bridge" section in between. This shape is important in classical music (Sonata form) as well as being found throughout popular music as a way of organising the lyrics and shape of the melody.

Lyrics and history

The lyrics use lots of references to “Hipster” language, which is the slang of 1930s and 1940s New York, which was the centre for jazz and swing at the time. Dancing to Big bands was hugely fashionable amongst people of all ages but especially younger people – this was the period when young people began to have more freedom to go out and enjoy themselves and the music followed the different styles and fashions for dancing. It was the pop music of the day and in many ways the whole idea of pop music was born in the jazz era, from about the 1920s onwards. Many of the ways music is still organised in pop music (a band that uses a rhythm section to create a feeling of energy, lyrics designed to tell stories about the experiences of young people, repeating chord sequences, a feeling of improvisation and freedom in performance) have their origins in jazz.

“**Jamming**” meant dancing in a circle, featuring particular pairs of dancers or single dancers showing what they could do, often energetically and at high speed. It also meant musicians improvising, often competitively, in a band together.

A “**Hepcat**” was a fashionable young dancer or player.

The Jive was a popular dance style of the period

“**Diggin’**” means enjoying or appreciating someone’s playing

“**Stand**” means the stage or band setup in a club

“**Hot**” and “**Smooth**” are descriptions of jazz styles. Hot meant playing fast with energetic solos whereas smooth was a more refined style of music, possibly for an older and richer audience.

“**It don’t mean a thing**” is a reference in the lyrics to Duke Ellington’s famous song of the same name: “It Don’t Mean a Thing if it Ain’t Got That Swing”.

“**Cool**” means good, the right way to do things and maybe without showing off about it too much!

Satchmo was the nickname of Louis Armstrong, the first great jazz soloist, who was an amazing trumpet player and singer.

Duke is Edward Kennedy “Duke” Ellington who was one of the greatest jazz composers, a brilliant jazz pianist and a bandleader.

Diz is short for John Birks “Dizzy” Gillespie, who was a pioneer of the Bebop jazz style of the 1940s, taking the style forward by adding even more technical brilliance and complexity to jazz in this period.



Create

1. Try out rhythm exercises. Do some call-and-response rhythms, either clapping or vocalising
2. Sing through the blues scale and/or play on instruments. Incorporate into call-and-response ideas
3. Learn the melody and lyrics, including the harmony in the chorus



Perform

Assign singers (and instrumentalists) to the melody and solo roles, as heard on the demonstration track: have some perform the tune, and others play 'call-and-response' solos in between phrases and longer solos in the central section, using the 'no solos' backing track.