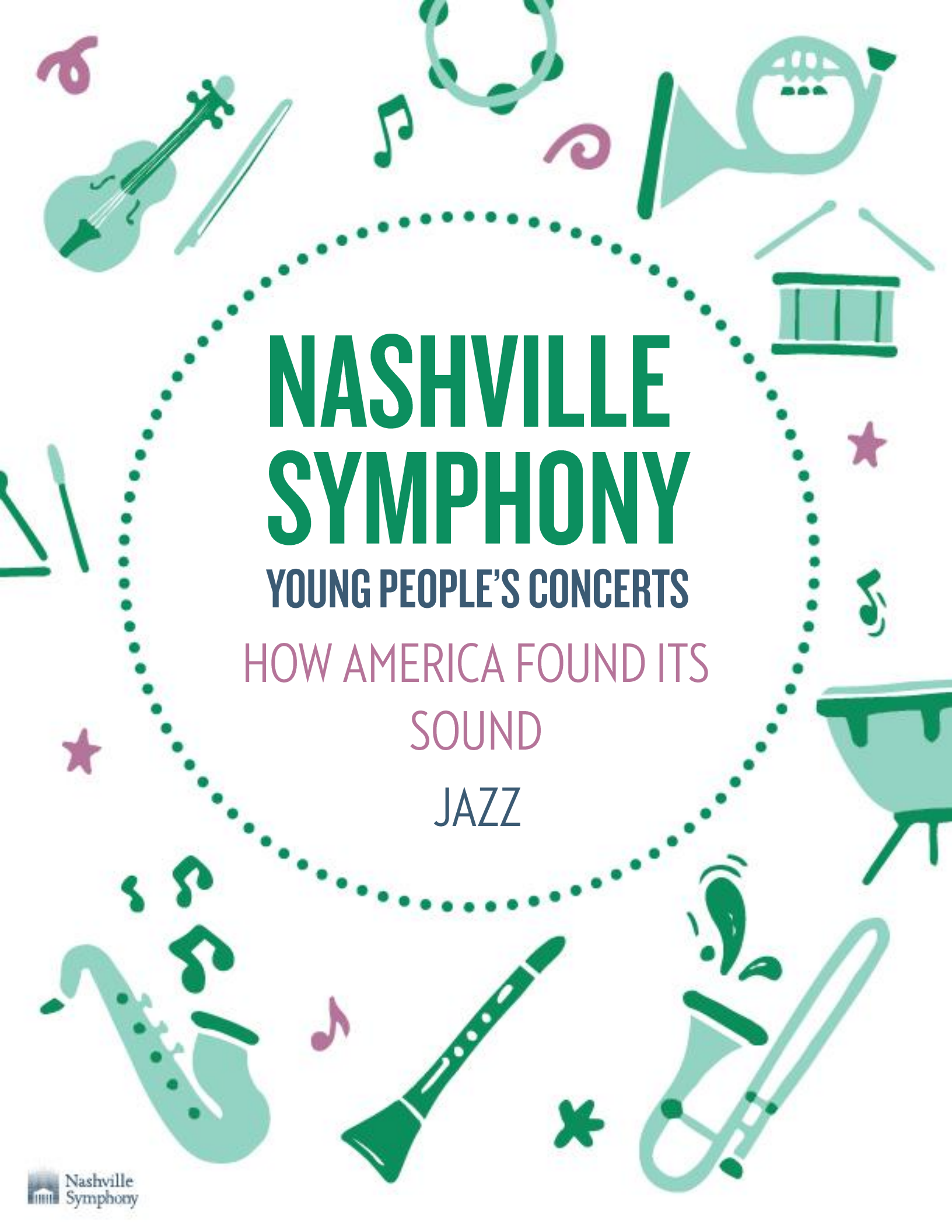




NASHVILLE SYMPHONY

YOUNG PEOPLE'S CONCERTS

HOW AMERICA FOUND ITS
SOUND
JAZZ

HOW AMERICA FOUND ITS SOUND

JAZZ

Grades 5 - 8

STANDARDS

5.GM.P3.B, 5.GM.P3.C, 5.GM.Cr1.B, 6.GM.P1.C, 6.GM.P3.B, 6.GM.R1.B, 7.GM.P3.B, 7.GM.Cr1.A, 7.GM.Cr3.A, 8.GM.P3.A, 8.GM.P3.B, 8.GM.Cn1.A

OBJECTIVES

Students will identify the characteristics of Swing music and recognize common Big Band instruments.

Students will explain the concepts of jazz improvisation and scat singing.

Students will improvise original rhythmic or scat patterns over a Swing backing track.

Students will demonstrate an understanding of Swing backing track.

TIME NEEDED

45 - 60 minutes

MATERIALS

- Video: [Benny Goodman Orchestra "Sing, Sing, Sing" Gene Krupa - Drums, from "Hollywood Hotel" film \(1937\) - YouTube](#)
- Video: [Jimmie Lunceford - Rhythm is our business \(1936\)](#)
- Video: [Jazz Fundamentals: What Is Improvisation?](#)
- Video: [Ella Fitzgerald and Duke Ellington "It Don't Mean A Thing \(If It Ain't Got That Swing\)"](#)

GENRE OVERVIEW

Jazz began in the early 1900s in New Orleans, where African American musical traditions blended with blues, ragtime, spirituals, gospel, and marching band music to create a new style of music built on creativity and self-expression.

One of the most popular styles of jazz was **Swing**, which became America's dance music during the 1930s and 1940s. Swing music is known for its strong, steady beat, "swinging" rhythm, and energetic feel. It was often performed by a **Big Band**, a large jazz ensemble made up of saxophones, trumpets, trombones, and a rhythm section including piano, guitar, bass, and drums.

One of the most important elements of jazz is **improvisation**, or creating music on the spot. Jazz musicians often invent new melodies and rhythms while performing. Sometimes musicians even improvise with their voices through **scatting**, singing made-up syllables instead of words to create original musical ideas.

Smithsonian National Museum of American History, *What Is Jazz?* [What is Jazz? | National Museum of American History](#)

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PROCEDURES:

- 1. Hook:** Video: [Benny Goodman Orchestra "Sing, Sing, Sing" Gene Krupa - Drums, from "Hollywood Hotel" film \(1937\) - YouTube](#)
- 2. Say:** As you watch and listen, think about this question: *How does this music make you FEEL?*
 - Discuss student responses
- 3. Say:** Today we're learning about one style of jazz called **Swing**. Swing became America's most popular dance music during the 1930's and 1940's. It has a strong beat, an energetic feel, and was performed by large ensembles called **Big Bands**.
- 4. Say:** A **Big Bands** is a large jazz ensemble made up of four main instrument groups
 - Saxophones (Alto, Tenor, Baritone)
 - Trumpets
 - Trombones
 - Rhythm Section (Piano, Guitar, Bass, Drums)
- 5. Watch:** Video: [Jimmie Lunceford - Rhythm is our business \(1936\)](#)
- 6. Say:** As you watch this Big Band performance, see how many instruments you can identify.
 - Students Think → Pair → Share to discuss their findings followed by a whole group share-out.
- 7. Say:** One of the most important parts of jazz is **improvisation**. **Improvisation** means **creating music on the spot without reading it from a page**. Instead of playing exactly what is written, jazz musicians invent new musical ideas while they perform.
- 8. Watch:** Video: [What is Improvisation - Jazz At Lincoln Center](#)
 - Why do you think musicians enjoy improvising?
- 9. Say:** Sometimes jazz musicians improvise using their **voices** instead of instruments. This is called **Scatting**. **Scatting** is improvising by singing made-up syllables like "shoo-be-doo-bop" instead of real words. Just like a trumpet or saxophone player improvises a solo, a singer can improvise using nonsense syllables.

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PROCEDURES CONTINUED:

10. Watch: Video: [Ella Fitzgerald and Duke Ellington “It Don’t Mean A Thing \(If It Ain’t Got That Swing\)”](#)

11. Say: like As you listen, think about these questions:

- What words does Ella sing?
- Is she singing real lyrics?
- How does her voice sound like an instrument?

12. Discuss: Students should recognize:

- Made-up syllables
- Different rhythms
- Different pitches
- Musical conversation

13. Activity: Circle Scat Jam

Say: Now it’s your turn to become jazz musicians! We’re going to improvise just like Ella Fitzgerald. The class will keep a steady beat while each student improvises.

(Teacher may create/choose a jazz-styled backing track to play along)

One at a time, each student will have **four measures** to create their own rhythm.

- Student may scat using made-up syllables, clap, pat, snap, stomp or combine voice and body percussion.

There are **no wrong answers!** The goal is simply to create something original. Continue around the circle until everyone has had a turn.

14. Discuss:

- What is a Big Band?
- What is improvisation?
- What is scatting?
- How did improvising make you feel?
- Was everyone’s improvisation exactly the same? Why not?

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