
TEACHING RESOURCES
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JAMation

TEACHING RESOURCES KINDLY
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FIRST PERFORMANCE

JAMation's first performance was by Haringey Young Musicians Big Band, Wiltshire Youth Jazz Orchestra, Forest Little Big Band, Plastic Youth Jazz Orchestra and Kirklees Youth Jazz Orchestra at the Music for Youth National Festival Birmingham in July 2012.

ABOUT JAMation

JAMation is a 'jazz-flavoured' performance piece suitable for instrumentalists of a certain standard (around Grade V), and in any combination (big band, symphony orchestra, rock band, piano duet, etc.).

Essentially, *JAMation* is a collection of musical 'strands' that can be played in different combinations and orders. As such, it is as much a creative process as it is a performance piece. Through experimentation players are able to shape the music as they wish. It is an exciting challenge both for an established ensemble and for an experimenting GCSE / A Level class.

The composers of *JAMation* first met through the band Jazz Warriors. Saxophone player Jason Yarde works in jazz, classical and hip-hop, as a producer, composer, arranger and performer. Andy Grappy is a tuba player (jazz, classical, folk), composer and teacher. He is currently Head of Southwark Junior Centre for Young Musicians.

PLAYING JAMation

Lead sheets for *JAMation* can be downloaded from the Music for Youth website at: www.mfy.org.uk/evolve/thesoundvault.

The musical 'strands' or 'motifs' are written on the lead sheet. Each musician is issued with the same sheet but with a clef and transposition suitable for their instrument.

There are 23 motifs on the sheet. They are not specific to an instrument and can be played at any octave. In that way, a motif that appears to be melody-like can also become a bass line, and a drum rhythm can become a line for a pitched instrument. Motifs can also be played with any instrumental technique (ie. pizzicato, muted), or at any dynamic level.

Jason and Andy suggest that these motifs should be 'internalised' so that it is possible to move from one to another freely and without worry – although it is unlikely that any one player will ever be required to play them all.

The tempo (crotchet = 135) is the same for everyone, and everyone will need to keep strictly in time and be very aware of the beginning and end of repeats and sections. Each musical motif is a multiple of five beats in length (30, 25, 20, 15, 10, 5), and can be repeated as many times as necessary. Clusters of motifs can therefore be played all at the same time, so long as attention is given to the lengths of each, and where they must collectively end if the music is to stay together.

There is no one fixed time signature but, whether in 4/4, 5/4, 3/4 or any other arrangement, the number of beats always adds up to a multiple of 5. With enough repetitions and careful counting, (and with clear conducting) the music will always fall architecturally in to shape.

There are 'families' of motifs: A, A2, A3, A4 and A5, making up the first; B, B2, B3, the second – and so forth. These 'families' have their own characteristics and can be played together to very good effect, but each one can also be performed in combination with themes from another 'family'. You get to choose.

In the words of Jason Yarde, "The character of the piece changes depending on which combination of themes are used, so energy and a sense of adventure are required!" "There are no wrong answers, just degrees of rightness...".

In addition to the above, and in moments where the music settles, there are also opportunities to take off into solo improvisation.

There are no rules about how the end product should be shaped. There is no prescribed start point or end point. Answers will appear through experimentation, but the order of themes as presented on the sheet would be

a good place to start.

MAKING CHOICES

The nature of the motifs and 'families' of motifs, and how to put them together to create the sound you want, will unravel through experimentation. Here are some ideas to help:

A.

There are four 'A' motifs, each with the characteristic 7 bars of 4/4 time followed by a single, energising bar of 2/4. 'A' is potentially one of the leading lyrical tunes of the piece. A2 and A5 are chordal and can be played as they are, or split through an instrumental group to create a sustained sound (brass, for example). A4 works well treated as a bass line or a melody line. A3 enters in the fourth bar and can, at some stage in the piece, make a good 'interjection' during an improvised solo.

B.

The B motifs follow the same 4/4 + 2/4 pattern as the A family, but introduce a more off-beat, less languid feel. All three begin in the same way but then take their own direction. This creates an exciting flurry when played together.

C.

If you start the piece with the A or B themes, the C themes will then come through as cross-rhythms. C and C2 are in 3/4 (five bars) and C3 and C4 are in 5/4 (3 bars). The falling 3/4 pattern of C itself is very distinctive and goes extremely well with most other themes. The 5/4 tunes (C3 and C4) are also very powerful when played in isolation by the whole ensemble.

D.

The D section motifs offer a dramatic contrast. Instrumentalists play a rising scale with staccato accents and a challenging, additive rhythm. Dashed bar lines and circled numbers make this clearer on the lead sheet. In effect, it is rather like having a bar of 1 beat followed by a bar of 2 beats, a bar of 3 beats, a bar of 4 beats and a bar of 5 beats (15 beats in total) in which you play an accented note on the first beat of the bar. You can try playing (or even clapping/speaking) this with everyone in unison, or possibly over a drumbeat. When this is secure, and if you choose, you can play it in canon, with groups / individuals starting at different points within the pattern.

D2 is probably the most virtuosic and challenging motif for most instrumentalists but sounds fabulous (and less exposed) played with different groups at different starting points.

E.

E and E2 motives are identical but with the first two and the last two bars reversed (and in different octaves). They also have the same rhythmic and

pitch connections to the D motifs. Both motifs are in 20 beats, which creates interesting cross-rhythm patterns when playing with other family motifs. E3 is the same melody as C3 though with a contracted rhythm. Again, the number of beats (25) is irregular and provides opportunities for cross-rhythm patterns. For a very fluid sound, E3 can be played with canonic entries, one bar apart.

F.

F motifs are short (5 and 10 beat) patterns that will need to be repeated over and over again when played along with other motifs. F and F2 in combination can build up to a very effective and sudden ending.

C-I.

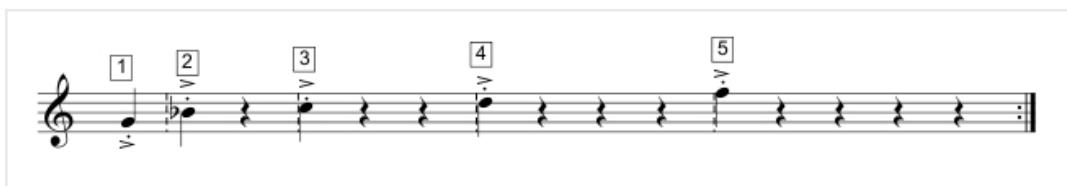
These are drum rhythm motifs in 3/4, 4/4 and 5/4 that can be used flexibly through the piece. The motifs can also be used as rhythmic material for tuned instruments.

STARTING POINTS AND FURTHER EXPERIMENTATION

JAMation is an adventurous performance piece for an established ensemble but could equally serve as a starting-point for a class (GCSE / A Level) 'composing for performance' project. Whatever the intention, the process is paramount. In the words of Jason Yarde, the piece is 'a jump off point for the musical journey, led by its performers'.

Here are some 'ways in':

- Choose one motif as a group, practise it separately or together, and then perform it in unison. Repeat the activity together with one of the chord (or rhythm) 'accompaniment-like' themes.
- Ask each player to choose their own motif to play, perhaps looking for something less obvious for their instrument. Experiment with putting 'motifs' in different combinations with others. Circulate and try as many combinations as possible.
- Try playing all the 'family' motifs together. Do they work, or do they get in each other's way? Which ones work best?
- As a group, start with a relaxed version of A, A2, A4 and A5 together. If you like, add B (for a little off beat movement). Practise until it flows and then add C (or any motifs from the C group) to introduce some cross-beat rhythms. Can you still hold the rhythm?
- Again, using a skeletal background, try sections of individual improvisation. Use the pitches from the A motif as a guide.
- Divide the group in two and ask the players to perform B2 and A3 together. These patterns each happen at different points in the 30 beat scan so it will produce an interesting 'call and response' antiphonal effect.
- Upload any or all of the motifs to your class computer system (on any sequencing or notating software) and invite the class to cut and paste their own ideal section of music. Try to recreate it in a live performance.
- Divide the class in two. Practise playing F and F2 at the same time. Make a decision about how many times to play it (taking in to consideration that one is 5 beats long and the other is 10), and practise a dramatic, guillotine-like ending.
- Isolate the D motif:



Practise the rhythm on percussion instruments and then on your own instruments. What instrumental technique will you apply to produce the short, sharp attack that is needed? Try it in two or three groups, beginning at different points in the sequence. What are the difficulties and how do you put them right?

- Listen to the rehearsal clip on the website (or other performances of *JAMation* on YouTube) and ask the group to identify motifs. Look out for ones that inspire – both individually, and in combination. Can you recreate those as a group?
- Approach from the opposite direction. Think what shape you would like your performance piece to take and find ways to do it.
- Create your own motif, or motif family. Add it to the performance.
- Put it all together. Perform it, video it, and send us a recording for our website at: www.mfy.org.uk/evolve/thesoundvault.