

Engage Your Students in Composition and Arranging
CMEA Winter Conference
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1) FORM

a. Familiarize your students with the basic types of forms for jazz standards:

- 32 bar AABA/AABC
- 16 bar form
- 12 bar blues

b. Cover the basic components of large scale form in an arrangement:

- Intro
- Head in
- Solos (with backgrounds, hits, etc.)
- Head out
- Outro (or Coda/Tag)

2. Essential arranging/composing elements:

- a. Tempo/Feel
- b. Harmonizing melodies – parallel writing vs. polyphonic writing
- c. Orchestration – arrange how the melody gets distributed/supported amongst melodic instruments and rhythm section
- d. Dynamics
- e. Pitch Range

Listening examples:

AABC - "Autumn Leaves" Cannonball Adderly *Somethin' Else* (1958)

AABA - "Take the A Train" Duke Ellington *Never No Lament: The Blanton-Webster Band* (1941)

12 bar blues - "Blue Train" John Coltrane *Blue Train* (1958)

12 bar blues - "Blues in the Closet" Bud Powell *Blues In the Closet* (1956)

2) Writing exercise: Write a Riff Blues and arrange it.

Step 1: Write a four bar melody using notes from the Bb blues scale and repeat it over the 12 bar form.

Step 2: Harmonize the head using parallel motion.

Step 3: Write a polyphonic counter melody to the main melody.

Step 4: Write a contrasting four bar intro (some options: sit on the first chord, come up with a short repeated phrase, have a single instrument play, loop the last few chords of the piece)

Step 5: Come up with an ending (some options: tag the last phrase, write a coda, repeat the intro, abrupt cut off, long extended chord)

Step 6: Put it all together!

Blues Writing Exercise Example

Erika Oba

INTRO

B \flat 7

Piano

p Intro over repeated bass vamp

HEAD 1

B \flat 7

Single Line Melody

Pno.

mp

E \flat 7

B \flat 7

Pno.

F7

E \flat 7

B \flat 7

F7

Pno.

HEAD 2

17 **B \flat 7** Harmonization of melody (parallel motion)

Pno. *f* Countermelody (polyphonic motion)

21 **E \flat 7** **B \flat 7**

25 **F7** **E \flat 7** **B \flat 7** **To Coda**

SOLOS

29 **B \flat 7**

Piano accompaniment for measures 33-36. The score is in B-flat major (two flats). The left hand plays a steady eighth-note bass line. The right hand plays a steady eighth-note treble line. Chords Eb7 and Bb7 are indicated above the staff.

Piano accompaniment for measures 37-40. The score is in B-flat major (two flats). The left hand plays a steady eighth-note bass line. The right hand plays a steady eighth-note treble line. Chords F7, Eb7, Bb7, and F7 are indicated above the staff. The section ends with the instruction "D.S. al Coda".

"OUTRO" section starting at measure 41. The score is in B-flat major (two flats). The left hand plays a bass line with a *cresc.* marking. The right hand plays a treble line with a *ff* marking. The section concludes with a "tag 4x" instruction.

Blues Writing Exercise Example

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INTRO Write a Four Bar Intro

Piano

A musical staff for piano, consisting of two staves (treble and bass clef) joined by a brace on the left. The key signature has two flats (Bb and Eb), and the time signature is 4/4. The staff contains four empty measures for writing an introduction, with repeat signs at the beginning and end.

HEAD 1

5 $\text{Bb}7$ Write A Single Line 4 bar Melody and Repeat Two More Times

Pno.

A musical staff for piano, consisting of two staves (treble and bass clef) joined by a brace on the left. The key signature has two flats (Bb and Eb). The staff contains four empty measures for writing a melody. Above the first measure is a chord symbol $\text{Bb}7$ and the number 5. The staff is marked with repeat signs at the beginning and end.

9 $\text{Eb}7$

$\text{Bb}7$

Pno.

A musical staff for piano, consisting of two staves (treble and bass clef) joined by a brace on the left. The key signature has two flats (Bb and Eb). The staff contains four empty measures for writing accompaniment. Above the first measure is a chord symbol $\text{Eb}7$ and the number 9. Above the third measure is a chord symbol $\text{Bb}7$. The staff is marked with repeat signs at the beginning and end.

13 $\text{F}7$

$\text{Eb}7$

$\text{Bb}7$

$\text{F}7$

Pno.

A musical staff for piano, consisting of two staves (treble and bass clef) joined by a brace on the left. The key signature has two flats (Bb and Eb). The staff contains four empty measures for writing accompaniment. Above the first measure is a chord symbol $\text{F}7$ and the number 13. Above the second measure is a chord symbol $\text{Eb}7$. Above the third measure is a chord symbol $\text{Bb}7$. Above the fourth measure is a chord symbol $\text{F}7$. The staff is marked with repeat signs at the beginning and end.

HEAD 2

B \flat 7

17 Harmonize the main melody (parallel motion)

Pno.

Write a counter melody (polyphonic motion)

E \flat 7

B \flat 7

21

Pno.

F7

E \flat 7

B \flat 7

To Coda

25

Pno.

SOLOS

B \flat 7

29

Pno.

33 Eb7 Bb7

Pno.

37 F7 Eb7 Bb7 F7 D.S. al Coda

Pno.

"OUTRO"

41

Pno.