

JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER

Jazz for Young People®

Study Guide



MARCUS
PERFORMING ARTS
CENTER

**2026/27 MARCUS PERFORMING ARTS
CENTER STUDENT MATINEE SERIES**

For Grades K-12



Welcome to the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra's Jazz for Young People® program. In these pages you will find information about the world's premier big band—the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra (JLCO)—and the fundamentals of jazz.

Meet the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra

The Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra, comprising 15 of the finest jazz soloists and ensemble players today, has been Jazz at Lincoln Center's resident orchestra since 1988. This remarkably versatile big band performs and leads concerts and educational events in New York, across the U.S., and around the world, in band format concert halls, jazz clubs, and public parks and with symphony orchestras, dance troupes, students, and an ever-expanding roster of guest artists.



The JLCO features the following instruments:

Saxophones
Flutes
Clarinets
Trumpets
Trombones
Piano
Bass
Drums



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Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra with Wynton Marsalis

Together, these instruments can sound like one giant musical voice, or like a group of individual voices having a conversation.

Goals

In this interactive concert, you will:

Explore the tones, colors, and personalities of the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra

Learn about the fundamentals of jazz

Listen to, describe, and analyze music

Learn about leadership, collaboration, and the value of individuality





Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra with Wynton Marsalis

Ryan Kisor, *trumpet*
Kenny Rampton, *trumpet*

Wynton Marsalis, *trumpet*
Vincent Gardner, *trombone*
Elliot Mason, *trombone*
Chris Crenshaw, *trombone*

Sherman Irby, *alto and soprano saxophones, flute, clarinet*
Alexa Tarantino, *alto and soprano saxophones, flute, clarinet*
Chris Lewis, *tenor and soprano saxophones, clarinet, bass clarinet*
Abdias Armenteros, *tenor and soprano saxophones, clarinet*
Paul Nedzela, *baritone and soprano saxophones, clarinet, bass clarinet*
Dan Nimmer, *piano*
Carlos Henriquez, *bass*
Obed Calvaire, *drums*



About Wynton Marsalis

Wynton Marsalis is the Managing and Artistic Director of Jazz at Lincoln Center. Born in New Orleans, Louisiana in 1961, Marsalis began his classical training on trumpet at age 12 and soon began playing diverse genres in local bands. He entered The Juilliard School at age 17 and joined Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers. Marsalis made his recording debut as a bandleader in 1982 and has since recorded more than 70 jazz and classical albums which have garnered nine GRAMMY® Awards. In 1997, Marsalis became the first jazz artist to be awarded the prestigious Pulitzer Prize in music for his oratorio *Blood on the Fields* which was commissioned by Jazz at Lincoln Center. Marsalis is also an internationally respected teacher and spokesman for music education. He led the effort to construct Jazz at Lincoln Center's new home, Frederick P. Rose Hall, which opened in October 2004 as the first education, performance, and broadcast facility devoted to jazz.

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Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra w/ Wynton Marsalis



What is Jazz?

Jazz is a style of music built around rhythm, improvisation, expression, and collaboration. It developed primarily within Black communities in the United States in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, drawing from American musical traditions, blues, marches, ragtime, spirituals, hymns, and other influences.

Jazz is more than a single sound—it is a way of making music together and responding in the moment.

Imagine a group of musicians having a conversation, but instead of using words, they use sound. One musician plays an idea. Another responds. The drums change the energy. The saxophone tells a story. The whole band listens, reacts, and creates something together.

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Fundamentals of Jazz

Swing

The rhythmic feel of jazz: A feeling that makes the beat move and bounce. When a band “swings,” everyone is connected rhythmically, listening and responding to one another as a group. Also a big band style used for dancing.

Listen: Can you feel the beat? Can you feel the rhythm propelling the music forward?

Improvisation

The act of creating music spontaneously: A hallmark of jazz expression. A soloist might change the melody, invent a new rhythm, or repeat and develop a musical idea, all while using improvisation to express their individual voice and personality.

Watch and listen: Who is taking a solo? What new ideas are they creating?

Blues

The foundation of much American popular music originated in the American South during the mid-1800s among African Americans. It expresses a wide range of emotions, especially sorrow or longing, while also conveying resilience, hope, and a sense of optimism. Listen: How does the music make you feel?

Call and response

A musical conversation: A musician can play a musical “question,” and another musician, or the whole band, can “answer.” Musical patterns can also be written into a composition where different sections call and respond to each other. This concept has deep roots in African American Gospel traditions.

Listen: Can you hear a musician “talking” to another musician?

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What is a big band?

A big band, or jazz orchestra, is a musical ensemble that typically features 12–17 musicians playing together. The ensemble is organized into four sections: saxophones, trumpets, trombones, and the rhythm section.

The **saxophone** section is generally made up of two alto, two tenor, and one baritone saxophone. Saxophones are part of the woodwind family, so players are often able to play other woodwinds like the clarinet and flute. Woodwind instruments, with the exception of the clarinet, are made of metal. Their warm tone (and their name) comes from the wooden reeds responsible for their sound.

Using 3–5 words, how would you describe the sounds of each woodwind instrument? *For example, Saxophone: expressive, powerful, etc...*

Saxophone: _____

Clarinet: _____

Flute: _____

The **trumpet** section is generally made up of 3–5 players. Trumpets are made out of the metal brass. Brass instruments can create a range of colors and textures and have a very powerful sound. The trumpets, the higher pitched instruments of the brass family, often lead the entire band.

Using 3–5 words, how would you describe the sound of the trumpet?

Trumpet: _____

The **trombone** section is generally made up of 2–4 players. Trombones feature a telescoping slide rather than valves, are lower pitched, and can play both harmonies and sweet melodies.

Using 3–5 words, how would you describe the sound of the trombone?

Trombone: _____

Both the trumpets and the trombones can produce a range of sounds using mutes and vocal effects. They can shout, squeal, honk, growl, whisper, and sing!

The **rhythm** section includes piano, bass, drums, and sometimes guitar or other percussion. It drives the music and provides its rhythmic and harmonic foundation.

The pianist establishes and reinforces the form of a piece through transitions and harmonic and rhythmic cues, while supporting the harmony and rhythm with chords that complement the melody and soloists. The bass player and drummer work together to maintain the groove, with the bass outlining the harmony and the drummer adding accents and rhythmic responses.

Based on what you just learned, which instrument in the *rhythm* section do you think is the heartbeat of the band, and why? _____





Music Vocabulary

(you might hear some of these words used during the performance)

Break

A brief, temporary pause in the main groove where a soloist or a specific section takes over before the full band returns.

Composer

The creator of a music composition who builds the form of a piece by combining melody, rhythm, and harmonic structure.

Groove

The steady rhythmic feel or pulse that makes music flow and makes you want to move to it. There are many types of grooves in American music such as, jazz, swing, two-beat, funk, Afro-latin, and gospel.

Melody

A tune; a succession of notes that form a complete musical statement. It is the primary statement of a piece of music.

Orchestrate

To arrange music in a form that assigns specific parts to various instruments within an ensemble.

Register

Where the notes of an instrument sound (high, medium, or low).

Riff

A short, repeated musical phrase used as a background for a soloist or to add drama to a musical climax.

Shout chorus

The loud, climactic chorus of a piece of music, played with spirited riffs and sometimes improvised embellishments.

Solo

When one musician plays alone, or is featured while the band plays behind them, usually within the structure of an existing song. A solo can be written or improvised.

Stride piano

A virtuosic piano style with a powerful left hand covering bass and chords, while the right hand plays or improvises melodies.

Texture

The atmosphere created by the combined sounds of musical instruments, harmonies, and rhythms.

Timbre

The tonal quality of a voice or instrument; for example, an artist's timbre may be described as raspy and rough, or smooth and clear.



A Quick Jazz History Lesson



1890s–1910s: *Early Jazz*

Jazz emerged in New Orleans primarily within Black communities, and drew from American musical traditions, blues, marches, ragtime, spirituals, hymns, and other influences. Louis Armstrong who started playing the cornet around 1912, and eventually switched to the trumpet, later became one of its most important early innovators.

1920s: *The Jazz Age*

Jazz spread nationally, with cities such as Chicago, Kansas City, and New York becoming major centers. Big names included Duke Ellington and Louis Armstrong.

1930s–1940s: *Swing*

Big bands became enormously popular. Swing music filled dance halls and helped make jazz a major form of American popular music. Count Basie, Duke Ellington, and Benny Goodman were among the era's leading bandleaders.

1940s–1950s: *Bebop*

Musicians including Thelonious Monk, Charlie Parker, and Dizzy Gillespie developed faster, more complex styles.

1950s–1960s: *Cool Jazz, Hard Bop and Modal Jazz*

Musicians explored new sounds, structures, and approaches to improvisation. Artists such as Charles Mingus, Gerry Mulligan, Miles Davis, and John Coltrane pushed jazz in new directions.

1960s–Today: *Jazz Keeps Changing*

Free jazz, jazz fusion, Latin jazz, contemporary jazz, and countless crossover styles have expanded what jazz can sound like. Artists such as Ornette Coleman, Wayne Shorter, Miles Davis, Machito, and Herbie Hancock were at the forefront of experimenting with these new approaches. Artists who continue to advance the artform include Jon Batiste, Isaiah J. Thompson, Esperanza Spaulding, Samara Joy, Cécile McLorin Salvant to name a few.

Your Jazz Mission At The Concert

During the JLCO performance:



WATCH—Who is leading the music?



LISTEN—Can you hear the musicians responding to one another?



FEEL—What does the rhythm make you want to do?



IMAGINE—What story or picture does the music create in your mind?



NOTICE—What surprises you?

Thank You For Joining Us!

JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER



*Bring your
lessons to life!*

ABOUT MPAC'S STUDENT MATINEE SERIES

Student matinees are a series of special 60-minute daytime performances for K-12 students featuring internationally-renowned artists. A student matinee is the perfect way to bring the arts to life in a fun and memorable way. To learn more and view this season's matinee schedule, please visit [MarcusCenter.org](https://marcuscenter.org)

Please take a moment to review our [House Policies and FAQ](#). This includes our guidelines on safety, accessibility, food and drink, backpacks, cell phones, photography, recordings, and more.

THANK YOU TO OUR GENEROUS STUDENT MATINEE SERIES SUPPORTERS!



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