

Digable Planets, *K.B. 's Alley*

When Jazz Meets Hip-Hop - Middle School level, grades 6-8

Objectives:

1. Students will identify elements of jazz in a hip-hop recording.
2. Students will blend another style of music with jazz.

Optional Objective:

1. Students will use music technology to create a groove for a jazz mix.

Time: One to three class periods

Materials Required for Objectives:

Computer access to Internet recordings and speakers for playback to class (or individual headphones for students to listen on their own). Optional: software such as *Garageband* (Macintosh), *Logic*, *Cakewalk*, *Acid* (Windows), *Band-in-a-Box* (Windows or Macintosh) or CD-ROM program *Rock, Rap n Roll* (Windows and Macintosh).

Procedure:

Activity 1 - "Most of you probably listen to specific hip-hop artists. Thinking about what you know about jazz and improvisation and what you know about the construction of hip-hop music, what are ways the two kinds of music are similar? Different?" Encourage discussion and write ideas on the board or overhead projector. "If jazz was to combine with hip-hop how do you think it would sound?" Encourage discussion and write ideas down on the board or overhead. "We are going to listen to a group called Digable Planets, a hip-hop group that was influenced by jazz. This song is called *K.B. 's Alley*. Let's listen and see if your predictions about the way the music might sound are true for this recording." Play the recording. "Did the music sound the way you thought it would? What sounded like you thought it would? What didn't sound like you expected it to sound?" Encourage discussion and write ideas down on the board or overhead.

Activity 2 - "Now it is your turn to fuse two styles of music together. You can pick any style you want except one style has to be jazz." Put students into pairs or small groups. Encourage them to use songs they know and figure out ways to arrange them to combine elements of two styles of music. Remind them to use techniques they used in their arrangements of *So What*. Allow students to perform their arrangements live or record them to tape (this helps shy students who might be uncomfortable performing in front of peers).

Optional Activity:

Activity 3 - Using one of the software programs listed above, allow students to create grooves they can use to help with realizing how another style of music can integrate with jazz. Students may choose to perform their arrangements with the software playing some of the

parts or some students may create entire mixes that are completely created on the computer. Encourage students to share their arrangements with the class and explain how they integrated the two types of music.

Extension:

Listen to Bobby McFerrin's collaborations with musicians Yo-Yo Ma and comedian Robin Williams (*Beverly Hills Blues* on *Spontaneous Inventions*). Discuss how McFerrin integrated jazz and improvisation with the work of non-jazz artists.

Indicators of Success:

Based on previous learning experiences, students will integrate elements of jazz with music of a different style that they are familiar with.

Learn more about Dignable Planets:

<http://www.allhiphop.com/hiphopnews/?ID=3562>

<http://www.allmusic.com/cg/amg.dll?p=amg&sql=11:ij9ds36ba3ng~T1>

Bobby McFerrin Collaborations:

Hush, Yo-Yo Ma and Bobby McFerrin

Spontaneous Inventions, Bobby McFerrin

Play, Bobby McFerrin and Chick Corea