

Andy Kirk and His Orchestra, featuring Mary Lou Williams, *Scratchin' in the Gravel*

Feeling Swing, Part 2 - Intermediate level, grades 3-6

Objectives:

1. The student will find counts 2 and 4 and demonstrate through tapping two fingers in palm of hand.
2. The student will vocalize swing triplet feel.
3. The student will perform body percussion with partner to triplet feel.

Optional Objectives:

1. The student will visit the web sites listed below and learn more about Mary Lou Williams.
2. The students will watch a video of Mary Lou Williams playing piano.

Time: One to two class periods.

Materials Required for Objectives:

Computer access to recording on the Internet and speakers for playback to class. Optional: video of Mary Lou Williams.

Procedure:

Activity 1 - Listen to *Scratchin' in the Gravel* and show counts 2 and 4 by tapping two fingers in the palm of hand. The tempo may be too fast for some students to keep up with, but if you have the students face you and if you model 2 and 4, it will help them.

Activity 2 – You can say to the class, “The recording we just listened to was a song composed by pianist Mary Lou Williams. When Mary Lou wrote this song people would often comment that she ‘plays pretty good for a girl.’ Why do you think they said that about her?” People said that because there were few women playing in jazz groups in those days. Women could sing with a band but it was considered guy’s work to play with a band. Mary Lou broke all the rules. Not only did she play great piano but she also wrote most of the music for the Andy Kirk band. She was nicknamed “The Lady That Swings the Band” and there was even a song that the band played called *The Lady That Swings the Band*. What do you suppose people meant by swinging the band? (Students might connect the 2 and 4 feel, or mention she was the best musician in the band, or say that because she wrote the songs the band played she was the one who swung the band). ”Listen to the recording again and keep your 2 and 4 beat but when you hear the piano solo by Mary Lou look at me and smile so I’ll know you hear her solo.”

Activity 3 - “Part of the reason that Mary Lou swung the band was that she took that 2 and 4 groove and made it even more swinging. I want you to say *DOO-dle-dah* (be sure you accent the *DOO*).” Students will echo you. Practice it making sure they echo back with the louder

DOO. Try it with the recording. You will hear many figures where the band is playing that *DOO-dle-dah* swing triplet pattern. Model the *DOO-dle-dah* for the students when you hear the triplets. Try to get the students to do this with you. Repeat recording until students can independently hear where the *DOO-dle-dah* comes in. (It comes in at 0:13, 0:22, 0:32, and 0:42 1:23, 1:33, 1:53, and 2:33.)

Activity 4 – When students can find it on their own, put students in pairs for this next activity. “Let’s put the *DOO-dle-dah* on our bodies.” Have students get into pairs facing each other. They will be playing the *DOO-dle-dah* by clapping left hands, then right hands (partners) and for the *DOO*, they will clap both of their own hands together. They will need to try this a few times to find and perform the *DOO-dle-dah* with the recording. If students get too excited and forget to listen to the recording, pause the recording and say “this is really fun I know, but you have to listen really close to the recording so you will know when the doo-dle-dah part comes.”

Optional Activities:

1. Visit the web sites below to learn more about Mary Lou Williams.
2. Show video of Mary Lou Williams playing her famous “History of Jazz According to Mary Lou” performance (from *Piano Legends*).

Learn About Mary Lou Williams:

<http://newarkwww.rutgers.edu/ijs/mlw/intro1.html> On the section “Kansas City & Clouds of Joy,” you can listen to another of Mary Lou’s songs for the band, the hit *Walkin’ and Swingin* and see photos of Mary Lou with the band.

http://www.pbs.org/jazz/biography/artist_id_williams_mary_lou.htm. Listen to NPR interviews with jazz musicians talking about Mary Lou Williams.

Video Resources:

Piano Legends. DVD/video, 63 minutes. New York: Video Artists International, Inc., 1989.
Norman Granz’s Jazz in Montreux Presents Mary Lou Williams ’78. DVD. Eagle Rock Entertainment, 2004. www.eaglerockent.com.