



# Jazz on 52<sup>nd</sup> Street

## The Billy Taylor Trio



Grades 7-12

Thursday, January 11, 2005 (Rebroadcast from April, 2001)  
11 a.m.-12 p.m. ET

When viewing *Jazz on 52nd Street* and participating in this guide's suggested activities, the following National Standards for Music will be addressed: 6 and 9.

### Students Will See and Hear...

The program is a performance and demonstration of jazz music from the 1940s, as heard on 52nd Street in New York City. Dr. Billy Taylor describes the jazz clubs in Manhattan and talks about his own experiences working and performing there with the great jazz musicians of that time. The Billy Taylor Trio, with Dr. Taylor on piano, Chip Jackson on bass, and Winard Harper on drums, demonstrates the many styles of jazz on 52nd Street and shows how these styles have evolved over time. Film clips of important artists complement the discussion as Dr. Taylor explains such jazz concepts as call and response, stride playing, as well as theme and variation.

### Curriculum Connections:

**Jazz on 52nd Street** correlates with the following curricula: Music, Social Studies/History, Language Arts

### Educational Objectives

- To identify various musical styles and recognize each instrument's characteristic sounds
- To explore American cultural history from the 1940s as reflected in the jazz scene in New York City
- To understand how popular cultural art forms, such as jazz, reflect changes in society
- To understand how language can support an emerging artistic movement; to appreciate different styles of communication, from spoken word to musical performance

## Program Notes

### Jazz as American Music

Jazz developed in southern African American communities more than 100 years ago. When Africans came to America, they brought their musical traditions. The music, sounds, and instruments of other American peoples influenced African Americans to create new styles of music such as spirituals, work songs, and later, jazz. Over the past 100 years, jazz music has changed, incorporating a variety of styles, such as ragtime, swing, bebop, and cool jazz.

Dr. Billy Taylor calls jazz "America's classical music." Composers such as Mozart, Bach, and Beethoven produced European

classical music, but jazz is truly American. Famous jazz composers include Scott Joplin, Duke Ellington, Dizzy Gillespie, and Miles Davis.

### 52nd Street Revue

One of the most culturally rich places and times in the history of jazz was 52nd Street in New York City during the 1940s. "The street that never slept" squeezed more than 20 nightclubs into one city block, including Three Deuces and The Onyx Club. 52nd Street attracted renowned jazz artists, less established artists hoping for a break, young musicians looking to study with a master, and audiences who partied all night long while enjoying some of the finest American music.

At the time, 52nd Street represented an entire history of jazz because so many different jazz styles were played in the various clubs. Audiences could stroll from one establishment to the next and hear the continuity and influences, as well as the differences, among styles.



Dr. Billy Taylor

# Instructional Activity

## Improvise a Story

Improvising is spontaneous composition, creating new music on the spot. Jazz musicians usually know the basic melodies, harmonies, and rhythms on which they will improvise. They then extend and develop the music as they go along. Jazz musicians use lead sheets as outlines for the music they will play and improvise. Use the following outline as a “lead sheet” to tell a story. Make up (improvise) the details of the story as you go along.

I. I woke up late this morning...

II. When I went to the sink to wash my face, something was different...

III. Then I heard the strangest sound...

IV. And that’s how I ended up on 52nd Street...

## Musicians on the 52nd Street

### Jazz Scene

#### William “Count” Basie —

influential pianist and big band leader with roots in Kansas City

#### “Big Sid” Catlett —

Louis Armstrong’s favorite drummer; able to play the early styles of jazz with Louis Armstrong yet could switch styles and play early bebop

#### Edward Kennedy “Duke”

#### Ellington —

famous composer, pianist, and band leader; performed all over the world and wrote more than 2,000 compositions before his death

#### Ella Fitzgerald —

famous jazz vocalist known for her improvised “scat” solos and ability to mimic other vocalists and instruments

#### John Birks “Dizzy” Gillespie —

trumpeter who frequented many New York City clubs; often associated with the birth of bebop

#### “Philly” Joe Jones —

famous drummer at Café Society and with “The Quintet” featuring Miles Davis

#### Oscar Pettiford —

bassist of the early bebop era; played in many clubs with musicians like Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker

#### Willy “The Lion” Smith —

early jazz stride pianist who frequented many New York City “rent parties”

#### Leroy “Slam” Stewart —

the most recorded jazz bassist of the 1940s; famous for humming while playing bass solos with his bow

#### Art Tatum —

largely self-taught jazz pianist remembered for his skillful technique and complex harmonies; influenced by Fats Waller

#### Thomas Wright “Fats” Waller —

jazz pianist known for his “stride” technique and his song “Ain’t Misbehavin’”

#### William Henry “Chick” Webb —

drummer and big band leader at the Savoy Ballroom; led a famous band duel against Benny Goodman’s band at the Savoy Ballroom and won

#### Ben Webster —

versatile jazz musician on saxophone and piano; most famous for playing tenor saxophone with Duke Ellington for several years

#### Theodore Shaw “Teddy” Wilson —

jazz pianist with Benny Goodman’s band; famous for playing with singer Billie Holiday

## Internet Resources

For more information, visit:

Billy Taylor’s Biography:

[billytaylorjazz.com/story.php](http://billytaylorjazz.com/story.php)

Information on the history and personalities of jazz:  
[smithsonianjazz.org](http://smithsonianjazz.org)

A conversation on jazz with Dr. Billy Taylor:

[artsedge.kennedy-center.org/content/3295/](http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/content/3295/)

A study guide on the origin, elements, and styles of jazz:

[artsedge.kennedy-center.org/cuesheet/pdf/kce\\_jazz.pdf](http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/cuesheet/pdf/kce_jazz.pdf)



Winard Harper



Chip Jackson and Dr. Billy Taylor

Other resources related to **Jazz on 52nd Street** can be found on page 20.

Part of *A New America: The 1940s and the Arts*, the Catherine B. Reynolds Foundation Series for Artistic Excellence.

For additional resources, visit [kennedy-center.org/pwttv](http://kennedy-center.org/pwttv)