



THE KENNEDY CENTER
Performing Arts Series

ARTS-BASED PROGRAMMING VIA SATELLITE/WEB

presented in cooperation with PRINCE WILLIAM NETWORK

Jazz and the Violin
The Billy Taylor Trio with
John Blake, Jr., Violin

Wednesday, February 7, 2001
 Grades 6 – 12

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

Background Information

The Artists

Dr. Billy Taylor is America's leading spokesman for jazz. He educates audiences through his concerts, books, and television and radio programs. He also created JAZZMOBILE, a touring concert stage that brings free jazz performances to thousands of people. He has been a guest performer at the White House. At the Kennedy Center, Taylor is the Artistic Advisor for jazz, and hosts a popular jazz discussion and performance series.

Dr. Taylor grew up surrounded by music. Nearly everyone in his family played piano and sang. When he was seven, Taylor studied piano. Then he switched to guitar, then to drums, and then to saxophone. Dr. Taylor's high school friends, accomplished musicians with high standards, convinced him to return to and focus

seriously on the piano. In his private lessons, he learned European classical music. During lunch periods and after school, however, he and his friends loved to play jazz.

After studying music in college, Taylor played at the jazz clubs along New York's legendary 52nd Street. There he met and learned from some of the greatest names in jazz. Inspired by the greats, Dr. Taylor himself has become a jazz legend.

John Blake, Jr. is regarded as one of the premier jazz violinists in the world. Born in Philadelphia, Mr. Blake first began his studies in the public school system. Later he won scholarships to study at conservatories (music schools for advanced students) in both the United States and Europe. He was also awarded a grant to study East Indian music. Mr. Blake performs and records around the world, and

teaches musicians of all levels, from beginners to college-level students.

The Billy Taylor Trio consists of pianist Dr. Billy Taylor, bass player Chip Jackson, and drummer Winard Harper.

Jazz

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. Jazz music has changed over the past 100 years and includes a variety of styles, such as ragtime, swing, bebop, and cool jazz.

Jazz is America's classical music. Composers such as Mozart, Bach, and Beetho-

What to Look and Listen for in Jazz

- **Watch for the way the musicians play together.** The members of Dr. Taylor's trio and John Blake, Jr. are carefully listening to each other and responding to what they hear each other play.
- **Syncopation** is stressing a note in an unexpected place, between beats or on a weak beat, in such a way that listeners want to move, nod their heads, clap their hands, or dance.
- **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. In the Billy Taylor Trio, Dr. Taylor may write the basic outline for each piece of music on a "lead sheet." (On lead sheets, musicians find the melody and information about the harmonic structure of the piece.) The trio then improvises on his framework.

Jazz, Cont.

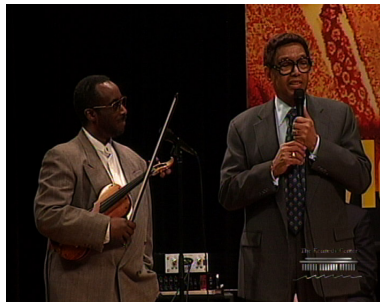
ven produced European classical music; but jazz is truly American. Famous jazz composers include Scott Joplin, Duke Ellington, Dizzy Gillespie, and Miles Davis. Just as the great composers of European classical music were also performers, so were the great composers of America's classical music.

About the Program

The violin has always been a part of jazz history. European colonists brought violins (also called fiddles) to the Americas. Because it was highly expensive for colonists to import musicians from Europe, African slaves trained as musicians. And these African Americans then used the violin when they created the unique musical styles that laid the foundation for jazz. Throughout the 20th century, the violin, like the trumpet and saxophone, played the melody in a variety of jazz styles.

During the program, the musicians will discuss and perform the music of historically significant jazz violin-

ists, such as Eddie South and Stuff Smith. They will also play the contemporary music of John Blake, Jr., and discuss the place of the violin in jazz today.



Instructional Activities

During the program, be aware of:

Rhythm. Move your hands and feet to the different rhythms of each instrument. Listen for how the bass player and drummer keep the pulse of the music.

Tempo is the speed of the music. Are individual pieces consistently fast or slow throughout, or does the tempo change in certain sections of the music?

Dynamics refers to the volume of sound in the music. Are individual pieces consistently loud or soft throughout, or do the dynamics

change in certain sections?

Improvisation. Listen carefully to the melody at the beginning of a piece. This is usually the musical material that will be repeated, developed, and extended throughout the work. Listen carefully when musicians are playing solos, during which they often improvise. Try to follow the solo from beginning to end, and hear how the solo differs from the basic melody.

Ensemble refers to the way musicians in a group like the Billy Taylor Trio work together. Observe how the musicians communicate with one another, physically and musically. Do they exchange glances? Follow the players as they alternate taking the "lead."

Resources

On the Web:

kennedy-center.org/pwvtv/masterclass.com

Recordings:

Quest (Sunnyside Record SSC 1058)

Paradise (Electra 6E182)

Horizon (Milestones M-9094)