

The Queen's Cartoonists

STUDY GUIDE

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Purpose of this guide

1

The purpose of this study guide is to give teachers a starting point to discuss an upcoming performance by The Queen's Cartoonists with their students. This guide provides background information about the ensemble, its mission, and what to expect from a TQC concert.



Overview of The Queen's Cartoonists

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Utilizing the Golden Age of animation as their backdrop, The Queen's Cartoonists prove that jazz and classical music can capture the likes of a 21st century audience - while still being relatable, educational, virtuosic, and hilarious.

Synchronized cartoon projections go hand in hand with jokes and anecdotes involving the cartoons and their composers. The Queens, NY based ensemble welcomes all audiences, regardless of age, gender, or familiarity with the concert hall. Expect the unexpected: classic cartoons, cult favorites, modern animation, and elements of a musical circus!



Mission

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The Queen's Cartoonists are on a musical mission of equal parts music preservation, education, and performance. TQC breathes new life into two classic forms of American art - jazz and cartoons - and highlights how these art forms interact with each other. We are used to using our eyes when we experience cartoons, but do we ever stop and think about the music and other sounds that make these films so unique? TQC demonstrates how difficult (and fun!) the process of creating music for films can be.



The Concert Experience

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In today's world of computer and phone-delivered entertainment, it's important to discuss what it means to attend a concert. There is no substitute for live music! While many concerts are "serious" affairs, TQC encourages students to clap, laugh, and cheer along with the films and the band's efforts onstage. We also encourage students (with the permission of their teachers) to take photographs and videos, and to upload, tag, and discuss the performance through typical online platforms (Instagram, Facebook, etc).

Questions for the classroom: Have you ever been to a concert? What was it? How did people act? Did you enjoy it? How did it differ from watching a movie or playing video games?



What Is Classical Music?

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Classical music is a type of music that developed in Europe, culminating with the great composers of the 18th and 19th centuries. As the world has become more inter-connected, European musical traditions have spread throughout the world, and composers have an increasingly diverse set of influences to draw from in their work.

Becoming a performer of classical music takes extraordinary discipline and decades of study. Classical music emphasizes counterpoint (independent lines of music that occur simultaneously, but are also rhythmically unique from each other), and structure (with some pieces being hours in length).

Questions for the classroom: Can anyone name any classical composers? Or any countries that produced a lot of classical music? What instruments are used in classical music?

Class Activity: Listen to some classical music (suggestions: Beethoven's 5th Symphony; "Nessun Dorma" from Turandot by Puccini; Clair de lune by Debussy). What are your impressions of this music?



Ludwig van Beethoven



Vienna, Austria



Claude Debussy



Paris, France



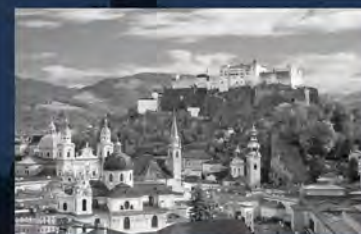
Giacomo Puccini



Lucca, Italy



Wolfgang A. Mozart



Salzburg, Austria



Johann Sebastian Bach



Leipzig, Germany

What is Jazz Music?

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Jazz music was developed in the American South in the generations after slavery by African-American musicians who were trying to hold on to their West African musical traditions, while at the same time being exposed to European styles and instruments. The music spread from its original home of New Orleans through cities like Kansas City, Chicago, Havana, and New York City, where it ultimately found a permanent home. And while jazz is performed by musicians all over the world, New York City remains the center of the jazz universe. Jazz music emphasizes improvisation (spontaneous composition) and rhythm (syncopation and “swing”).

Questions for the classroom: Can anyone name any jazz musicians? What instruments are used in jazz music?

Class Activity: Listen to some jazz music (album suggestions: Miles Davis’s *Kind of Blue*; *The Great Summit* by Duke Ellington & Louis Armstrong; Dave Brubeck’s *Time Out*). What are your first impressions of this music?



Louis Armstrong



Duke Ellington



Miles Davis



Dave Brubeck

What is Cartoon Music?

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Simply put, "cartoon music" is the soundtrack from an animated film. It could mean jazz, or classical music, or something else! The composer's job is to compose music that supports what's happening on screen. Is there a chase scene? Then the music should probably be fast! Is there a scary moment? Then the music should be unsettling. A good film composer writes music that is both interesting on its own, and that adds to the emotional qualities of the film.



Carl Stalling

Questions for the classroom: What cartoons do you like? Can you describe the music?



Why is New York City So Important?

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The enormous amount of immigration and diversity in New York City made it a perfect place for the exciting rhythms and ever-changing nature of jazz music. African-American musicians found a city that offered less barriers to success than other parts of the United States, and the city's connections to the classical music world provided patrons, infrastructure, and a generally more educated city dweller that was enthusiastic about the music. And while jazz may not be the most popular music in the United States anymore, jazz clubs and universities in New York City have kept the musical traditions alive and thriving. Jazz musicians from all over the world dream of spending at least a few years in New York City, to hone their craft and be inspired by the sights and sounds therein.

Questions for the classroom: Have you ever been to New York City? What was your experience like? Did you see a concert or a Broadway show?



New York City



The historic jazz club Village Vanguard

What Is It Like to Be a Jazz Musician in New York City?

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Like most jazz musicians, the members of TQC have moved to New York City to engage with other musicians and grow as artists. Musicians in New York City spend their first few years trying to meet other musicians they want to play music with. By broadening the circle of people they know, musicians increase the chances that they get called for work. All gigs are made through personal connections - no one hands out resumes! In the world of jazz, the most important thing you can do is play your instrument well - no one cares where you went to school, where you previously worked, how old you are, where you are from, etc. Typical gigs for jazz musicians include small jazz clubs, musical theater pits, wedding bands, classical ensembles, jazz festivals, recording sessions, church bands, touring with pop artists, and teaching private lessons. Flexibility is a key feature of making a career as a performer in New York City!



Drew Pitcher
with Wayne Newton



Joel Pierson
with Ke\$ha



Mark Phillips
with Rebecca Perl



Rossen Nedelchev
with Alter View



Malik McLaurine
at Smalls Jazz Club



Greg Hammontree
with Regis Philbin

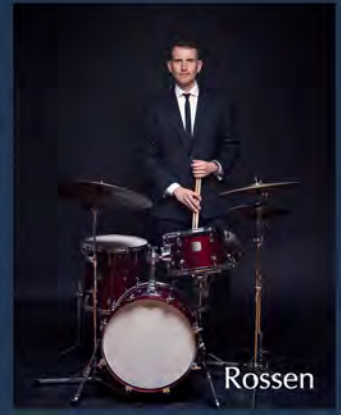
Who are The Queen's Cartoonists?

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Joel

Joel Pierson - Pianist and Artistic Director Joel Pierson is from Washington, D.C. His training is primarily in classical music composition, although he has always maintained a career as a performing jazz pianist. This unusual combination of skills led him to form The Queen's Cartoonists, where his role is primarily to find the films and arrange or compose the music for performance. There is almost never music available from these films, so Joel must listen to the original soundtracks and copy what he hears!



Rossen

Mark Phillips - Originally from Melbourne, Australia, Mark performs on clarinet, alto saxophone, soprano saxophone, flute, and piccolo. He has a mixture of classical and jazz training. Playing this many instruments at a professional level is a difficult task; many of them have similar fingerings, but not exactly the same.

Drew Pitcher - Hailing from Michigan, Drew studied jazz and performs on a wide variety of instruments, including tenor saxophone, alto saxophone, flute, penny whistle, theremin, bass clarinet, and many more. Drew is limited only by the amount of luggage he can bring on the plane!

Rossen Nedelchev - Born in Sofia, Bulgaria, Rossen studied jazz drums and percussion. In addition to performing, he also has extensive experience in recording technology, which is useful in today's world. It is important to diversify one's musical skills.

Greg Hammontree - Greg is from the state of Georgia, and while his primary training is on trumpet, he performs on French horn, trombone, and tuba as well. He also has studied the Foley Arts (the process of making sound effects for films) - he loves old-timey sound effects!

Malik McLaurine - Hailing from Queens, New York and Tokyo, Japan, Malik is an active member of the New York jazz scene. He comes from a long line of bassists, and plans on passing on the tradition to his pet cat, "Kitty-chan".



Mark



Greg



Drew



Malik

Syncopation

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Syncopation occurs in music when the rhythms that the listener expects to hear are unexpectedly changed. West African music is heavily syncopated, and this idea was carried to the New World by African slaves, and incorporated into American music. Here's a great way to demonstrate syncopation (have your class count and clap the examples out loud):

1) Most music that we hear breaks down into groups of 4 beats, where the first and third beats get the most emphasis (the strong beats), and beats 2 and 4 get the least emphasis (the weak beats). Try counting and clapping to 4 a few times, out loud, and see if you can hear this happen naturally.

Count	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	etc..
Clap	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

2) In most European music, the "pulse" of the music is therefore on the strong beats (1 and 3), while beats 2 and 4 are de-emphasized. Try this:

Count	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	etc...
Clap	X		X		X		X		

3) But what if we flip the emphasis around to beats 2 and 4? This is syncopation! Is this rhythm harder to perform?

Count	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	etc...
Clap		X		X		X		X	

4) Jazz musicians always emphasize beats 2 and 4, thus creating a sense of syncopation that never stops! As the tempo of the music gets faster, clapping on beats 2 and 4 gets harder and harder to do. As a final example, repeat the third clapping exercise, but count at faster speeds. You can use an online metronome to help. The Queen's Cartoonists play some extremely fast music (some pieces are over 300 beats per minute) and the syncopated feeling of the music is quite drastic!

See if you can keep up with the fast tempos in this video of TQC!

Musical Instrument Families

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There are four “families” of musical instruments, and The Queen’s Cartoonists perform on all of them. Check out the definition of each family, and see if your class can place each instrument the band plays in the correct family.

- 1) String instruments produce sound from vibrating strings. The strings can be plucked with fingers, bowed with a bow, or hit with a hammer.
- 2) Keyboard instruments are played using a keyboard - a row of levers which are pressed by the fingers.
- 3) Wind instruments produce sound by blowing air through a mouthpiece into a resonator (usually a tube of some variety).
- 4) Percussion instruments make sound by being struck or scraped by a beater, a stick, or by the hands.

Below are images of some of the instruments that The Queen’s Cartoonists play - can you correctly identify which family each instrument belongs to?



Advanced concept: The piano fits into multiple categories, as it has a keyboard, strings, and the sound is produced by percussively striking the strings!

Advanced concept #2: The term “wind instrument”, while technically referring to any instrument in which one blows air into, is usually divided into two categories: 1) woodwinds (flute, clarinet, saxophone, etc, where sound is produced by blowing through a reed), and brass (trumpet, trombone, tuba, etc, where sound is produced by buzzing the lips into a metal mouthpiece).

See if you can name the instruments and their families in this video of classic video game music!

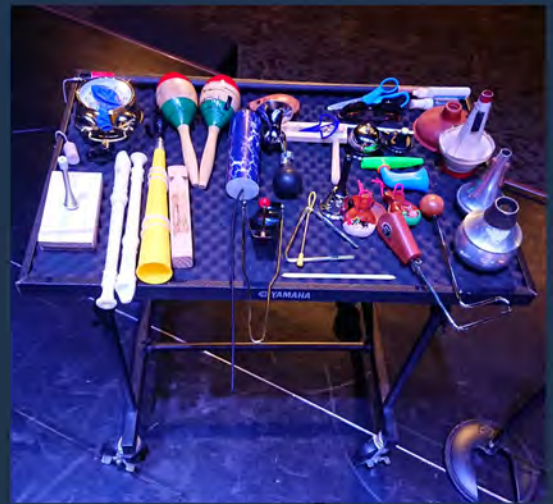
Sound Effects

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Sound effects, or Foley, is an important part of the film-making process (or cartoon-making process!). Sound effects in movies can't always be captured when filming the actors, so they are added later. In cartoons the characters are animated, so all sound effects have to be added! Here is a list of common Foley effects - ask your students how they would go about re-creating these sounds, and try re-creating some in class!

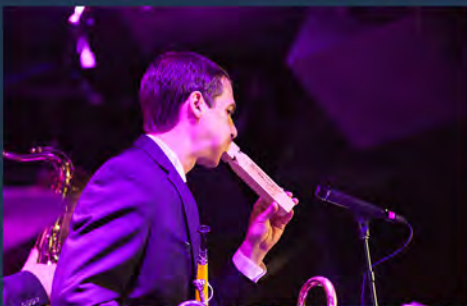
Common Sounds (well, fairly common!) with Foley Solutions

- Footsteps in the snow (stepping on cornstarch)
- Rain (frying bacon)
- Horse hooves (banging coconut halves together)
- Bones breaking (snapping celery stalks)
- Arrows flying by (quickly whip a bamboo stalk by a microphone)
- Walking through grass (shredded newspaper in a plastic bag)
- Thunder (waving a sheet of aluminum)
- Fire (crinkling cellophane)
- Heartbeat (push the bottom of a trashcan in and out)
- Kissing (kiss the underside of your own arm!)



Audio examples found in this link!

Watch The Queen's Cartoonists created some Foley effects for the cartoon The Haunted Ship.



Composing Music to Film

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Here is an exercise to help students understand how music can affect emotions. Take a common song that everyone knows (Happy Birthday will work nicely), and have students sing (or think about what it would be like to sing) the song with different emotions in mind:



- Happy
- Sad
- Scared
- Nervous
- Triumphant
- Bored
- Dreaming
- Really Needing to Use the Bathroom

Then, ask the students about their favorite cartoons (or films). What is the music like? Did it make an emotional impression? What instruments can be used to create different emotions?

Here's a video of TQC re-creating some famous film music by composer Danny Elfman.



Questions for After the Performance

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- Did you enjoy seeing The Queen's Cartoonists perform?
- Was the concert different than you expected?
- Were there moments that were funny? How was humor used? Is it unusual to see humor in music?
- Did the music help support the action in the cartoons?
- Did you notice any moments when the music on stage was synchronized with what was happening on screen?
- Did you notice that the musicians had the music memorized? Does that seem difficult?
- Was there a particular instrument that you liked more than the others?
- How do you think the musicians get on airplanes with that many instruments?
- Were there any cartoons you wished you had seen in the show?



Jazz & New York City Terminology

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- **7 Train** - a subway line in NYC that goes into Queens, where The Queen's Cartoonists live
- **Axe** - a musical instrument, such as a trumpet or saxophone
- **Blue Note** - a note that exists in-between the notes on a piano that creates a feeling of longing or sadness
- **Blues** - the pre-cursor to jazz, the blues came out of the Mississippi Delta and is the musical father of most American music. You sing the blues when you are sad, and singing the blues makes you feel better!
- **Bodega** - a corner store that sells basic supplies and tends to be open 24 hours a day
- **Cats** - fellow jazz musicians
- **Chops** - musical skills
- **Chord** - playing multiple notes at once, usually on piano or guitar
- **Dixieland** - a style of early jazz found in New Orleans
- **Faking** - improvising an entire piece of music... on the spot!
- **Gig** - a performance
- **Head** - the main melody of a piece of music
- **Hero** - a sandwich on a long piece of bread
- **Hot Garbage** - a smell unique to NYC in the summertime
- **Improvisation** - composing music in real time
- **Kit** - a drum set
- **Pizza Rat** - NYC's favorite rat, who was caught on camera dragging a slice of pizza into the subway
- **Plain Slice** - a piece of cheese pizza!
- **Schmear** - cream cheese that you put on a bagel
- **Shed** - to practice ("I need to go shed that piece of music")
- **Swing** - the rhythmic feel jazz musicians perform with
- **Times Square** - the center of NYC. Full of tourists! Locals really don't want to go there unless absolutely necessary
- **Waterbug** - a bug that really, really looks like a cockroach

Master Class

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This 45-60-minute-long masterclass is designed for middle school, high school, or college music students. It can be done with orchestra, band, wind ensemble, jazz band, or choir classes. If students are going to play during the master class, music appropriate to their proficiency level will be sent out in advance. It is expected that the students will study the music in class before the master class takes place. Please note that this program requires full backline and tech, and if projections are going to be used, the master class should be held in the show's venue.

In the master class TQC will cover a wide variety of subjects, including:

- the premise behind the band
- how the musicians met and decided to pursue this unusual project
- how the pieces are written, rehearsed, and performed
- tips and tricks for learning this difficult music
- a full rehearsal with the band
- walk the students through the music
- offer sectionals to help with difficult spots
- a Q & A for the students



Educational Performance / Q&A

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This 45-60 minute-long program is a youth oriented version of TQC's 'Ages 2-102' concert with audience Q&A. It is intended for students of all ages – from kindergarten through high school. Selections from the evening repertoire are performed, with an emphasis on classical music. Joel's banter is geared toward educating the students. A number of students will be asked to come onstage to engage with the band and to play percussion, piano, ask/answer questions, etc. Please note that this requires a full backline and tech and should be held in the show's venue.



Art Outreach

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The Queen's Cartoonists offer a unique outreach program for high school or college art classes interested in animating to the band's music. Students are sent recordings of the band's music ahead of time, and they are told to animate to the music, using stop-motion animation, computer animation, hand-drawn-cartoons, or whatever else they can come up with. When TQC is in town, the band and the art class will watch the animations together and discuss the process of creating music and visual art. At the concert, the student animations can be shown in the lobby before and after the show, or potentially screened during the concert with the band accompanying (subject to approval).



Music Business Master Class

In this educational offering, TQC demonstrates various aspects of the music industry to high school or college level students. Topics include: self-promotion, entrepreneurship, marketing, social media, PR, record labels, tour riders, and more. The discussion focuses heavily on "what it takes" to have a career as a recording and touring artist. Depending on the students' own experiences and interests, some materials can be sent ahead of time (to be discussed with teachers).