



Behind the Movie Chicago



VH1 Music Studio
Cable in the Classroom

Lesson for Music Classes, Grades 7-12

Lesson 1

Note to Teachers: The programs viewed in conjunction with these lesson plans may include references, consistent with the eras portrayed, to substance abuse, violent acts, and topics of a sexual and/or political nature. Because this may be considered inappropriate for classroom use in some communities, you are encouraged to review the programs before presenting them to your students, and if necessary, choose those sections that enhance your lesson and are acceptable for use in your classroom

Objective

- Students will be introduced to the genre of the musical film.
- Students will be aware of the music and dance trends of the 1920s.
- Students will identify musical motive as a basis for unity in composition.

National Standards for Music Education:

1. Singing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music.
5. Reading and notating music.
6. Listening to, analyzing, and describing music.
8. Understanding relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts.

Materials

- VHS VCR Player
- Television
- Audio playback equipment (CD Player)
- VH1's *Behind the Movie Chicago*, Act One
- Web-based lesson materials
- Copies of "WordSplash" worksheet (included with lesson) for students
- Copies of "Razzle Dazzle" lead sheet (included with lesson) for students (see Supplemental resources for MIDI version)
- Pencils (students)
- *Chicago: The Movie* soundtrack, Epic Records, 2003

Prior Knowledge:

- Students are familiar with basic music notation.
- Students have experience aurally identifying melodic and rhythmic passages.

Procedures

1. As students enter the room, play "Overture" from *Chicago: The Movie* soundtrack. Instruct them to listen specifically for any repeated melodic and/or rhythmic patterns. Distribute copies of *Chicago* "WordSplash" worksheets while students are listening.
2. Ask students if they are familiar with the music they have just heard, and what era it might represent. If they are not familiar with the music, have them comment on the style of the music, and explain that the music is from *Chicago*, a popular stage musical recently adapted to film.
3. Instruct students to discuss the words and names on the "WordSplash" worksheet with a partner, and predict how they might be associated with *Chicago: The Movie*. They should attempt to describe a relationship between the terms and the movie, and note their ideas on the worksheet.
4. Show VH1's *Behind the Movie Chicago*, Act One. As students watch the segment of the program, they should check and revise their initial answers as needed.
5. Lead students in a discussion of their findings after viewing the program segment.
6. Ask students to recollect listening to "Overture" in step 1. Did they hear any recurrent themes? What purpose could these themes serve? Share the following with students:

The center of jazz moved from New Orleans (1900s Dixieland) to Chicago in the 1920s. Much like what is seen and heard in the opening speakeasy scene of *Chicago: The Movie*, early jazz groups consisted of a rhythm section (piano, string bass, drums, and sometimes a banjo) that kept the beat and provided the harmonies over which a soloist played or sang. The main solo instruments

of jazz were typically trumpet, saxophone, piano, clarinet, and trombone. As with popular songs of today, there was often a catchy chorus or phrase which drew in the listener. This motive, or “hook”, is usually easy to remember melodically and rhythmically.

(For additional lessons pertaining to Jazz, see the “Say It Loud: A Celebration of Black Music in America” and “Live From the White House: Jazz, an Expression of Democracy” lesson series.)

7. Play “Razzle Dazzle” from *Chicago: The Movie* soundtrack for students. Ask them if they can identify the use of a “hook” in this piece as they listen. Listen to verse 1 again, and sing along. Did the repetition of motives help make this song easy to learn after one or two hearings?

8. Distribute copies of the “Razzle Dazzle” lead sheet and play “Razzle Dazzle” for students again. Have students, using a pencil, circle and connect repeated musical motives. Compare answers with the rest of the class.

9. Guide students in discussing the purpose of having a musical motive. Throughout *Chicago: The Movie*, the song “Razzle Dazzle” appears as underscoring for instances where Billy, Roxie’s lawyer, is leading onlookers astray from the truth. Upon hearing the repetitive, upbeat nature of this tune, one can’t help but follow along - even the viewing audience! How can a musical motive contribute to character development within a plot? Have students discuss the ways in which music and music motives can help to develop and communicate a storyline.

Curriculum Connection:

Social studies- Research the following terms and their possible relationship to 1920s *Chicago*: bootlegging, flapper, prohibition, speakeasy, Vaudeville.

Physical education - The Charleston was the popular social dance in the mid-1920s. The steps are thought to have originated with the blacks living on a small island near Charleston, SC. The wild heel kicks and up-and-down movement to the syncopated rhythm of ragtime jazz were expressive of the reckless daring and restlessness of the flappers. Learn the popular dance steps to the Charleston. A reproducible PDF of instructions can be found at www.homesteadmuseum.org/jtt/1920s%20charleston.pdf.

“WordSplash” Worksheet

With a partner, discuss the words and names below. Predict how these words might be associated with *Chicago: The Movie*. As you watch the first segment of the program, be listening to check and revise your answers as needed.

Maureen Dallas Watkins

Miramax

tabloids

CINEMATIC

Flapper

CHICAGO

“Hula Lou”

fame

PRISON

Razzle Dazzle

from "Chicago"

music by John Kander
lyrics by Fred Ebb

The musical score is written on seven staves of music in a single system. The key signature has one flat (B-flat) and the time signature is common time (C). The lyrics are written below the notes. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a common time signature. The lyrics are: "Give 'em the old razzle daz-zle Raz-zle daz-zle 'em". The second staff continues with: "Give 'em an act with lots of flash in it and the re- action". The third staff continues with: "will be pas- sion- ate Give 'em the old ho- cus po- cus". The fourth staff continues with: "Bead 'n fea- ther 'em How can they see with se- quins in their". The fifth staff continues with: "eyes What if your hin- ges all are rust- ing". The sixth staff continues with: "What if in fact you're just dis- gust- ing Raz- zle daz- zle 'em". The seventh staff concludes with: "and they'll nev- er catch wise".

Give 'em the old razzle daz-zle Raz-zle daz-zle 'em

Give 'em an act with lots of flash in it and the re- action

will be pas- sion- ate Give 'em the old ho- cus po- cus

Bead 'n fea- ther 'em How can they see with se- quins in their

eyes What if your hin- ges all are rust- ing

What if in fact you're just dis- gust- ing Raz- zle daz- zle 'em

and they'll nev- er catch wise

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Supplemental resources:

- “Razzle Dazzle” lead sheet MIDI file, courtesy of Christopher Fitzpatrick, Boston Conservatory, Boston, MA.
- MIDI file accompaniments of songs from Chicago: www.geocities.com/Broadway/4902/midi.html
- www.chicagothemovie.com
- www.chicagothemusical.com
- Marshall, Rob and Bill Condon. Chicago: The Movie and Lyrics. Newmarket Press, 2003.

National Standards for Music Education

1. Singing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music.
2. Performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music.
3. Improvising melodies, variations, and accompaniments.
4. Composing and arranging music within specified guidelines.
5. Reading and notating music.
6. Listening to, analyzing, and describing music.
7. Evaluating music and music performances.
8. Understanding relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts.
9. Understanding music in relation to history and culture.



These standards-based materials are provided through a partnership with MENC: The National Association for Music Education. This lesson plan was created by MENC member Christopher Fitzpatrick, Theater Division, The Boston Conservatory, Boston, MA.