**Unit Plan: Rhythm Changes**

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**Keywords:** Rhythm Changes, Jazz , I Got Rhythm, Sibelius.

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| **YEAR**  10-11 | **LEVEL**  5 | **DURATION**  10 Lessons |

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| **Achievement Objectives Being Assessed** | **Learning Outcomes** |
| **The Arts: Music**  Developing Practical Knowledge (PK) in Music | Students will:   * Recognise the A-A-B-A for of rhythm changes. (PK, UC) * Recognise rhythm changes chords and functions (PK, UC) * Create a rhythm changes chord chart using Sibelius. (PK, CI) * Improvise a melody constructed from chordal tones and pentatonic scales, in time, on their allocated instrument. (PK, DI, CI) * Compose a melody from chordal tones and pentatonic scales. Use Sibelius to add a composed melody to their rhythm changes chord chart. (PK, DI, CI) * Present their composition to the class using Sibelius and provide a review of their work. (PK, DI, CI) * Rehearse an original melody to a rhythm changes accompaniment, in time, on their allocated instrument within a group. (PK, DI) * Presents an original melody with a rhythm changes accompaniment. (PK, DI, CI) |
| **The Arts: Music**  Developing Ideas (DI) in Music |
| **The Arts: Music**  Communicating and Interpreting (CI) in Music |
| **The Arts: Music**  Understanding Music in Context (UC) |

**AIMS**

To explore the characteristic elements and features of music based on the traditional rhythm changes to compose and perform an original head over the changes.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS AND FOCUSING QUESTIONS**

**What is rhythm changes?**

In jazz rhythm changes refers to the chord progression based on the composition “I got Rhythm” composed by George Gershwin for a Broadway show ‘Girl Crazy’ published in 1930. The progression is the second most common set of chord changes played in jazz and is comprised of a 32-bar harmonic structure following the A-A-B-A song form. Rhythm changes were an immediate hit with jazz musicians of the 1930s. The changes were fun to play over; they could be altered, substituted for, bent this way and that, and otherwise reshaped creatively. The progression formed the basis for countless heads during the development of bebop era in the 1940s. A “head” is often an original tune based on another tune’s changes.

**What are the changes?**

The "rhythm changes" is a thirty-two-bar AABA form containing four eight measure sections. In Roman numeral shorthand, the actual chords used in the "A" section are i vi ii V. The “B” consists of a series of dominant sevenths that follow the circle of fifths iii7 vi7 ii7 v7. The last “A” follows the original.

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| **Composition based on Rhythm Changes Progression** | **Composer** | **Date** |
| Lester Leaps In | Lester Young | 1939 |
| Cotton Tail | Duke Ellington | 1940 |
| Five Guys Named Mo | Louis Jordan | 1943 |
| Anthropology | Charlie Parker/Dizzy Gillespie | 1945 |
| Moose the Mooche | Charlie Parker | 1946 |
| Dexterity | Charlie Parker | 1947 |
| Oleo | Sonny Rollins | 1954 |
| Rhythm-A-Ning | Thelonious Monk | 1957 |
| Meet the Flintstones | Hoyt Curtin | 1960 |
| Fingers | Thad Jones | unknown |

**The history of Rhythm changes**

The song came from the musical Girl Crazy which also includes two other hit songs, Embraceable You and But Not For Me, and has been sung by many jazz singers since. It was originally written as a slow song for Treasure Girl (1928) and found another, faster setting in Girl Crazy. Ethel Merman sang the song in the original Broadway production and Broadway lore holds that George Gershwin, after seeing her opening reviews, warned her never to take a singing lesson.

The song melody uses four notes of the five-note pentatonic scale, first rising, then falling. A rhythmic interest in the song is that the tune keeps behind the main pulse, with the three "I got..." phrases syncopated, appearing one beat behind in the first bar, while the fourth phase "Who could..." rushes in to the song. Its chord progression, known as the "rhythm changes", is the foundation for many other popular jazz tunes. The song was later expanded and used as the theme in Gershwin's last concert piece Variations on "I Got Rhythm" in 1934. The song has become symbolic of the Gershwin’s, of swing, and of the 1920s.

George Gershwin wrote the melody first and gave it to Ira to set, but Ira found it an unusually hard melody to create lyrics for. He experimented for two weeks with the rhyme scheme he felt the music called for, sets of triple rhymes, but found that the heavy rhyming "seemed at best to give a pleasant and jingly Mother Goose quality to a tune which should throw its weight around more." Finally he began to experiment with leaving most of the lines unrhymed. "This approach felt stronger," he wrote, "and I finally arrived at the present refrain, with only 'more-door' and 'mind him-find him' the rhymes." He added that this approach "was a bit daring for me who usually depended on rhyme insurance."

Ira also wrote that although the phrase "who could ask for anything more?" is repeated four times in the song, he decided not to make it the title because "somehow the first line of the refrain sounded more arresting and provocative." Wikipedia 2011

**LEARNING SEQUENCE**

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| **Teaching and Learning Experiences** | **Ongoing Assessment Approaches** |
| Lesson One: Introduction to Rhythm Changes  Students will engage with a rhythm changes PowerPoint covering Gershwin’s, “I got Rhythm”, 32-bar harmonic structure, A-B-A outline of form, jazz musicians of the 1930s, bebop ear of the 1940s, musical examples include the melody from “I Got Rhythm” performed by Judy Garland in ‘Girl Crazy’, “I Got Rhythm” performed by Ella Fitzgerald, “I Got Rhythm” performed George Gershwin, “Rubber Duckie” performed by Ernie aka Jeff Moss and “The Flintstones” composed by Hoyt Curtain, class sing along with “I got rhythm” | *Success Criteria:*  *I am able to* recognise the A-A-B-A for of rhythm changes. |
| Lesson Two: Form and chord analysis  Students will analysis rhythm changes in more detail covering the A and B sections, chords, their functions and turnarounds. Listening examples include “Anthropology” performed by Brad Mehldau, “Diggin’ on Dexter” by Horace Silver, “Rhythm-A-Ning” by Thelonious Monk, and “Oleo” by Miles Davis. Students will complete a Rhythm changes worksheet. | *Success Criteria:*  *I am able to recognise rhythm changes chords and functions.* |
| Lesson Three: Create a chord sheet  Students will create a rhythm changes chord chart using Sibelius. The chart will include a chordal instrument with notated triads, jazz chord symbols and a solo instrument line. Students that finish early can assist other members in the class. Students will use a Sibelius worksheet. | *Success Criteria:*  *I am able to create a rhythm changes chord chart using Sibelius.* |
| Lesson Four: Melody Composition Techniques  Students will model their understanding of chordal tones, diatonic scales and minor and major pentatonic scales through improvisation. Chordal tone example is “Anthropology” and “Amazing Grace” and “Summertime” provide the pentatonic examples. Sibelius files demonstrate running the changes using chordal tones, diatonic scales, minor and major pentatonic scales. Students will improvise pentatonic melodies using xylophones. | *Success Criteria:*  *I am able to improvise a melody constructed from chordal tones and pentatonic scales, in time, on my allocated instrument.* |
| Lesson Five: Writing Melody  Students will compose a melody from chordal tones and pentatonic scales. They will use Sibelius to notate their melody over their rhythm changes chord chart. Advanced students can begin writing lyrics for the chart or assist other members of the class. | *Success Criteria:*  *I am able to compose a melody from chordal tones and pentatonic scales. I am able to use Sibelius to add my composed melody to my rhythm changes chord chart.* |
| Lesson Six: Writing Melody  Students will continue their work on their rhythm changes melody and begin writing lyrics for their chart. Advanced students can add a bass line or assist other members of the class. | *Success Criteria:*  *I am able to compose a melody from chordal tones and pentatonic scales. I am able to use Sibelius to add my composed melody to my rhythm changes chord chart.* |
| Lesson Seven: Writing Melody  Students will continue and complete their melody and lyrics for their rhythm changes chart. Advanced students can add a two-part harmony or assist other members of the class. | *Success Criteria:*  *I am able to compose a melody from chordal tones and pentatonic scales. I am able to use Sibelius to add my composed melody to my rhythm changes chord chart.* |
| Lesson Eight: Individual Presentation  Students will present their compositions to the class utilising Sibelius’s playback feature and discuss their ambitions regarding their work and aspects of the work they like/would change. | *Success Criteria:*  *I am able to present my composition to the class using Sibelius and provide a review of my work.*  *Peer Assessment of sequenced backings: Students complete the following statements:*   * *I think your sequenced accompaniment is effective because…* * *Three strengths of it are…* * *Suggestions I would make to improve it are…* |
| Lesson Nine: Group Performances  Students break into groups, decide on a class rhythm changes composition(s) they wish to perform and practice the work(s) as a group. | *Success Criteria:*  *I am able to rehearse an original melody, to a rhythm changes accompaniment, in time, on my allocated instrument, within a group.* |
| Lesson Ten: Review performances  Students perform their work(s) in groups for the class and briefly review each others work. | *Summative assessment criteria below* |

**Summative Assessment**

Students will compose an original melody over a rhythm changes form using Sibelius and perform in groups with an accompaniment or backing track. (DI, CI)

**Performance Assessment Criteria (Teacher):**

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| Achievement | Achievement with Merit | Achievement with Excellence |
| Presents an original melody with a rhythm changes accompaniment.  Demonstrates appropriate ensemble awareness and presentation skills. | Presents an original melody with a rhythm changes accompaniment.  Demonstrates effective ensemble awareness and presentation skills. | Presents an original melody with a rhythm changes accompaniment.  Confidently demonstrates convincing ensemble awareness and communication skills. |

**RESOURCES**

**Electronic / Web Resources**

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rhythm_changes>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/I_Got_Rhythm>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CQRp9XIa2II>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fEpJHKum3lU&feature=related>

<http://www.hvar.komerce.cz/fakebook/142.gif>

**New Zealand Curriculum Exemplars**

· The Arts Exemplars   
<http://www.tki.org.nz/r/assessment/exemplars/arts/index_e.php>

**Possible Software**

· Sibelius.