

An abbreviated history of Jazz Trumpet

About this episode

This episode introduces audiences and young musicians alike to the history and lineage of jazz trumpet and how conceptual and technical approaches to the instrument have evolved throughout the history of the art form and the extent to which the technical and expressive capabilities of the instrument have been explored and expanded by some of the instrument's most creative masters.

The 1920s & 30s (Early Jazz)

Louis Armstrong, King Oliver, Cootie Williams, Bubber Miley

The 1940s (Bebop)

Roy Eldridge, Dizzy Gillespie, Fats Navarro

The 1950s (Hard Bop)

Clifford Brown, Miles Davis, Kenny Dorham, Clark Terry

The 1960s (Post Bop)

Lee Morgan, Blue Mitchell, Miles Davis, Donald Byrd, Booker Little

The 1970s (The Electric Revolution)

Woody Shaw, Don Cherry, Freddie Hubbard, Lester Bowie

The 1980s, 90s and 2000s (The Acoustic Renaissance)

Tom Harrell, Wynton Marsalis, Terence Blanchard, Roy Hargrove, Nicholas Payton

2020s (Ever-Evolving)

Learning objectives

- Learn about the role of the trumpet in jazz
- Learn about the history and lineage of jazz trumpet
- Learn about how conceptual and technical approaches to the instrument have evolved through the history of the artform
- Learn about how the instrument's most creative masters have explored and expanded the technical and expressive capabilities of the trumpet

Preparatory activities

Listen to the masters!

Listen to examples of jazz trumpeters featured in the episode on the Audio Playlist.

Be on the lookout!

Prompt the students to listen for the featured musicians discussing the following topics during the episode and/or assign different students to follow specific musicians as they watch the episode. (See the list of the musicians featured in this episode in the summary below.)

- What is the role of the trumpet in jazz?
- How have trumpeters contributed to the sound and evolution of the art form?

Exploration questions/activities

Below are brief synopses of the style/sound/innovations of the trumpet and some of the instrument's most creative masters through the eras. The descriptions summarize and reflect the unique perspectives of some of today's greatest practitioners of the instrument featured in this episode: Keyon Harrold, Freddie Hendrix, Jeremy Pelt, and Michael Rodriguez. Use these descriptions before, during, or after viewing the episode to reinforce the material!

Use the information below and from the episode to discuss the following:

- What did you notice about how the trumpet styles changed through the different eras? How did they stay the same?
- Did the sound/style of a particular trumpeter or specific era appeal to you?

EARLY JAZZ: 1920s & 30s

As early jazz grew out of parades and marching bands, the earliest of the jazz trumpeters were often part of a trumpet section in ensembles that also typically included clarinets, saxophones and other brass instruments. Early jazz of the 1920s

and 30s required the trumpet players to play written or orchestrated parts that rarely required them to solo or improvise, until **Louis Armstrong** came along. Other notable trumpet stylists to emerge out of the early jazz era included **King Oliver**, and members of Duke Ellington's earliest bands, **Cootie Williams** and **Bubber Miley**.

Louis Armstrong

Defining Style and Characteristics:

- Nicknamed "Satchmo", "Satch", and "Pops".
- Many refer to Armstrong as the "father of jazz"
- Well known for his trademark gravelly voice and iconic, lyrical trumpet playing
- His relaxed swing-feel and fat quarter notes are key characteristics of his inimitable sound
- Armstrong was considered the "utmost showman" (Freddie Hendrix)

"A lot of people call him the father of jazz. A young cat from New Orleans. Took the river boat up to Chicago and really set the world on fire and changed what it is we know about how to express yourself as a trumpet player and as a musician."

– Keyon Harrold

"He was the first to give us a vocabulary in jazz that still lives today. He was of that generation that was recorded, so you could actually hear how he ended up coming up with scats."

– Keyon Harrold

Cootie Williams

Defining Style and Characteristics:

- Began his career at 14 years old performing with the Young Family Band (alongside saxophone titan Lester Young).
- Well-known for his "jungle" style of trumpet playing
- Utilized the plunger mute in his trumpet playing
- Performed in the big bands of Chick Webb, Fletcher Henderson, Duke Ellington and Benny Goodman

“Cootie Williams, who’s coming out of Louis (Armstrong), but with a different style. More laid back, more personalized sound. Very sleek, but with a lot of personality.” – Freddie Hendrix

THE 1940s: BE-BOP!

By the 1940s, New York city had become the hotbed of jazz innovation and the trumpeter Roy Eldridge had emerged as one of era’s most impactful stylists. His big, soulful sound and sophisticated technique and melodicism particularly influenced the up-and-coming trumpeters, Howard McGhee, Fats Navarro and Dizzy Gillespie. They, along with the seminal alto saxophonist, Charlie Parker, went on to expand the boundaries of jazz improvisation and develop the groundbreaking style of jazz known as “Be-Bop.”

Roy Eldridge

Defining Style and Characteristics:

- Nicknamed “Little Jazz”
- Well known for the harmonic sophistication of his soloing
- Eldridge was a strong influence on trumpet titan Dizzy Gillespie
- He is thought of as a “bridge to modern jazz and bebop” (Keyon Harrold)

Played “hot jazz” [that was] “a little bit faster, a little bit higher, and exciting to see” (Jeremy Pelt)

Described as “the link between Louis Armstrong and Dizzy” (Michael Rodriguez)

“Roy Eldridge definitely had his own sound and his ability to play the trumpet is still unmatched. That ability is just ridiculous.” – Michael Rodriguez

“What (Roy Eldridge) adds to it, is the rhythmic aspect of it and breaking it up. Something that was called pecking by the time the fifties comes around..., which is breaking up the phrases and suggesting something else.” – Jeremy Pelt

Dizzy Gillespie

Defining Style and Characteristics:

- Hailed as “the father of bebop” (Keyon Harrold)
- Gillespie “was influenced by the language, the style, and the phrasing of Roy Eldridge.” (Michael Rodriguez)
- “Added a harmonic sophistication and rhythm” to the music. (Jeremy Pelt)
- Heavily involved in popularizing Afro-Cuban Jazz music.
- Well-known for his iconic beret, his horn-rimmed spectacles and his large, pouched cheeks while playing the trumpet

Dizzy Gillespie was “the father of what we call bebop,” he “changed the way we look at harmonic information” (Keyon Harrold), and he added “harmonic sophistication and rhythm” (Jeremy Pelt). He was influenced by the “language, the style, and the phrasing of Roy Eldridge” (Michael Rodriguez).

“The way he composed music, we still use his composition style, we still use his approach to improvisation, we still aspire to play like him.” – Keyon Harrold

“All of these guys would take Dizzy’s influence, and they wanted to learn how to play Dizzy, because Dizzy could play fast, Dizzy could play up, he could play down. He could play tricks. He could do it all!” – Keyon Harrold

Fats Navarro

Defining Style and Characteristics:

- An early pioneer of bebop
- Had a strong influence on Clifford Brown
- “Fats Navarro was one of the most underrated heroes” (Michael Rodriguez)
- He “brought a more polished sense of architecture to the music” (Jeremy Pelt)

THE 1950s: HARD BOP!

As the art form moved into the 1950s, the bebop standard of excellence and virtuosity was transcended and elevated even higher by a new, young generation of visionary trumpeters. Musicians including Miles Davis, Clifford Brown, Kenny Dorham, and Clark Terry forged exciting new approaches to modern jazz trumpet playing and pathways to achieving distinct, highly personalized sounds, concepts, and musical identities.

Miles Davis

Defining Style and Characteristics:

- Among the most influential and acclaimed figures in jazz history
- A pioneer in the genres of hard bop, cool jazz, modal jazz, and jazz fusion
- Well-known for such influential records as *Kind of Blue*, *Birth of the Cool*, and *Round About Midnight*.
- Actively performed from 1944 - 1991

Miles Davis was described as “slick” (Keyon Harrold), “pure genius” (Jeremy Pelt) and as a “true stylist in every sense of the word, from the way he acted as a man, to the way he dressed, down to the way he played” (Freddie Hendrix). In his early playing, “he was playing Dizzy-type information, just an octave lower (Michael Rodriguez) and “was extremely effective in terms of playing bebop in a fast linear concept that’s related to the way Dizzy was playing” (Jeremy Pelt). While the “bebop era was about play everything you can, play it fast, play it faster,” Miles was able to simplify. “He didn’t have to play everything, he was about space” (Keyon Harrold). According to Freddie Hendrix, Charlie Parker urged Miles to do more of what he was doing because “he could hear Miles’ sound before Miles heard his own sound.” He found “cool ways to slide through the chord progressions, to slide between the changes” (Keyon Harrold) and his

style was “primarily based around the chromatic scale and using enclosures to hit the chord tones” (Freddie Hendrix).

“He’s playing through the changes as opposed to the arc, the graph, the up and down, arpeggiating the chords, he’s thinking... all about the suspensions, all about hitting the right note and letting all of the harmony move underneath, or laying on a note that’s not necessarily in the chord and then all of the sudden it resolves.”

– Freddie Hendrix

“Music is more than just the notes. Music is about perspective and Miles had a lot of perspective. Miles was able to bring back a human element of accessibility.” – Keyon Harrold

Kenny Dorham

Defining Style and Characteristics:

- Composed the jazz standard “Blue Bossa”
- He combined a “staccato-type approach with bending the notes and slight growls here and there” (Freddie Hendrix).
- He was known for his “harmonic consideration and how he end(s) his phrases and address(es) the turnarounds” (Jeremy Pelt)
- Kenny Dorham “strived to play like Dizzy” (Freddie Hendrix)

“If I had to compare him to an animal, the way he approaches the changes, he’s like a sly fox. Kenny always plays the slickest stuff.” – Freddie Hendrix

Booker Little

Defining Style and Characteristics:

- Strongly influenced by Sonny Rollins and Clifford Brown.
- Little was the music director for Max Roach’s Band.
- He was at the forefront of avant-garde jazz, performing with Eric Dolphy.
- Passed away at the age of 23.

“Booker little had the purest sound of all those trumpet players because he’s very classically oriented. When you hear him play runs, it’s super clean. He never misses a note. Never.”

–Freddie Hendrix

THE 1960s: POST-BOP!

In the 1960s, new genres and styles of black American music, such as *gospel, rhythm & blues, rock & roll, and soul music*, emerged and captured the imaginations of an energetic, dance-loving youth culture, redefining the sound of American popular music. Groove, rhythm, and the blues were all at the foundation of these fresh new styles of music and it was no coincidence that defining characteristics of these new styles would permeate jazz. These characteristics were embraced by some of the era’s most open-minded, fast-rising jazz trumpet stars which included Miles Davis, Freddie Hubbard, Lee Morgan, Booker Little, Blue Mitchell, and Donald Byrd.

“What was special about... Kenny Dorham, and Fats Navarro, and Clifford Brown and Booker Little, and Lee Morgan, they all had this inkling that I must sound like myself.” – Keyon Harrold

Clifford Brown

Defining Style and Characteristics:

- His compositions “Sandu”, “Joy Spring”, and “Daahound” are now jazz standards.
- Well-known for his melodicism
- Was an influence to Donald Byrd, Freddie Hubbard, Lee Morgan and many more
- Worked with such notable musicians as Art Blakey, Sonny Rollins and Max Roach.

“He definitely played the language, but he played the language in his own way. There’s a lot of beauty in the way he approaches his notes, a lot of lyricism, very melodic.” – Michael Rodriguez

“Clifford Brown played the range of the trumpet. He went up and he could play like Dizzy, but he

was more back down to the middle register of the horn. He played more voice-like.” – Keyon Harrold

Lee Morgan

Defining Style and Characteristics:

- One of the pioneers of hard bop.
- Came to prominence recording on Coltrane’s Blue Trane
- Was a member of Art Blakey’s Jazz Messengers
- Well-known for his hit “The Sidewinder”
- Performed with such notable musicians as Wayne Shorter and Hank Mobley

Lee Morgan was one of the musicians in the era who was “heavily influenced by Clifford (Brown)” (Michael Rodriguez). He was known for having a “slicker and more sophisticated style” (Freddie Hendrix) and for really developing “a certain sound, a certain way of playing” (Michael Rodriguez).

Freddie Hubbard

Defining Style and Characteristics:

- Hubbard was a pioneer in the hard-bop and post-bop sounds
- Was a member of Art Blakey’s Jazz Messengers
- His unmistakable trumpet sound pushed jazz in new directions
- Well-known for such heralded albums as Ready For Freddie, Red Clay, and First Light.

“Freddie Hubbard opened up the trumpet world to a whole other way of playing. The dexterity, everything that Freddie brought, he just changed the game.” – Michael Rodriguez

“Before Freddie came to New York... you would swear that it was Clifford Brown... (But) It was such a big deal for cats on the scene to have their own identity, their own sound, and he started changing up his approach. It was broadened, a different type of swing.” – Freddie Hendrix

“Freddie Hubbard, his tone was beautiful, he mastered bebop, he mastered playing like Miles. He wanted to be like Miles. But he ended up being Freddie Hubbard.” – Keyon Harrold

Donald Byrd

Defining Style and Characteristics:

- Was a member of Art Blakey’s Jazz Messengers
- Explored the genres of funk and soul within his performance and composition
- Was an early influence on pianist Herbie Hancock
- “A forerunner before Lee Morgan and right after Clifford Brown” (Jeremy Pelt)

THE 1970s: THE ELECTRIC REVOLUTION

The emergence of electric instruments and advancements in music recording technology, combined with the widening impact of pop music and greater access and exposure to musical styles from all over the world, expanded creative possibilities for visionary jazz artists in the 1970s. These musicians merged genres, blurred stylistic boundaries, and abandoned conventional perceptions of what jazz was and could be. Trumpeters leading the charge in the 1970s included Woody Shaw, Don Cherry, Lester Bowie, Miles Davis, and Freddie Hubbard.

Woody Shaw

Defining Style and Characteristics:

- “I feel like Woody was the last great jazz trumpet innovator. Someone who just changed the language.” – Michael Rodriguez
- Innovator, mentor and spokesperson for jazz as an artform.
- Was a member of Art Blakey’s Jazz Messengers
- Compositions like “The Moontrane” and “The Organ Grinder” are now jazz standards.

Woody Shaw’s playing was described to have “more of a McCoy Tyner (approach) as opposed to a John Coltrane approach because McCoy’s playing style is primarily based around 3rds and 4ths... (and was) more pentatonic.” (Freddie Hendrix)

Lester Bowie

Defining Style and Characteristics:

- A member of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians
- Co-founded the Art Ensemble of Chicago
- Played and recorded with such a diverse array of artists as Fela Kuti, Albert King, Jack DeJohnette and David Bowie.

Lester Bowie, and other musicians in the era “wanted to be free to express their thoughts through vibrations, through sound” (Keyon Harrold).

In summing up this era, the featured trumpeters in the episode had the following to say:

“The (language) again changes... because now it just becomes this very organic thing where you’re not necessarily locked into playing changes. Playing something that’s maybe more in the moment.”

– Freddie Hendrix

“They basically were just expressing what it is they wanted to express. They didn’t want to be limited the idea of harmonic rules.”

– Keyon Harrold

THE 1980s AND 90s: THE ACOUSTIC RENAISSANCE!

By the 1980s, jazz had become more stylistically fragmented, detached from its roots, and in many ways, culturally eclipsed by genres of pop music that were more aggressively promoted, marketed, and consumed. Nevertheless, by 1983, a young, remarkably serious, virtuosic trumpeter from

New Orleans named Wynton Marsalis arrived on the scene with great fanfare and with an elevated public platform. He espoused a value and belief system that placed a premium on blues and swing traditions and the notion that the musical achievements and legacies of previous generations should be more widely acknowledged, revisited, and celebrated. His mastery of craft and deeply felt convictions and ideals inspired new generations of jazz trumpeters including Terence Blanchard, Wallace Roney, Tom Harrell, Roy Hargrove, and Nicholas Payton.

Wynton Marsalis

Defining Style and Characteristics:

- Introduced new generations to the roots of jazz music
- Artistic Director of Jazz at Lincoln Center
- Was a member of Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers
- Part of a family steeped in the jazz tradition (his father Elis Marsalis was a pianist, his brother Branford is a saxophonist, and his brother Delfeayo is a trombonist)

"He changed everything. We're talking about a guy that was primarily classically oriented in the beginning when he was 18. Of course he grew up in New Orleans, growing up in the traditions, he already had that underneath his belt, but to come into New York and start playing with Blakey, this is a whole new game." – Freddie Hendrix

"He's a story teller, you know, his music evokes storytelling to me." Freddie Hendrix

"Dressing up, being hip, I think Miles did that years ago, I think he just brought that back and said, 'Okay, you know, this can be cool again, it's okay to swing.'" – Michael Rodriguez

"His idea was to say, I want to get back to a place where traditional jazz can be in the forefront... He was about the progression of the music and the preservation of it, both, even to this day."
– Keyon Harrold

Nicholas Payton

Defining Style and Characteristics:

- A prolific trumpet player and multi-instrumentalist
- Deeply steeped in the jazz tradition but incorporates a contemporary sound
- Began his career touring with Marcus Roberts and Elvin Jones
- Has released dozens of critically acclaimed albums as a bandleader
- Has worked as a sideman with such notable artists as Joe Henderson, Jimmy Smith, Dr. John and Allen Toussaint.

"(Nicholas Payton) was very much also coming in the tradition of New Orleans, so he could totally play in that traditional style, but also bring the modern approach to jazz, a more contemporary sound." – Freddie Hendrix

Wallace Roney

Defining Style and Characteristics:

- Focused on playing within the hard bop and post bop idioms
- Studied trumpet with the great Miles Davis
- Was a member of Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers
- Played alongside such artists as Tony Williams, Art Blakey, Herbie Hancock and Wayne Shorter

"Wallace Rooney: pure innovator. Sonically, harmonically, and everything else. The way he approached it was just beautiful."
– Keyon Harrold

Roy Hargrove

Defining Style and Characteristics:

- Achieved worldwide recognition after receiving two Grammy awards in 1998 and 2002
- Hargrove brought elements of R&B, hip hop and soul into his compositions

- Helped to bring jazz music back into the mainstream and introduced generations to the artform
- Performed in many different musical contexts including his own 'RH Big Band', his neo-soul/jazz outfit 'The RH Factor' as well as in 'The Roy Hargrove Quintet'

"Roy Hargrove, can make the horn crackle, can make the horn speak to you like a voice, make the flugelhorn talk to you." – Keyon Harrold

"The church influence in his playing, you also have the hip hop influence in his playing, you also have the R&B influence." – Freddie Hendrix

THE 2020s: EVER-EVOLVING

In this concluding segment, the musicians featured in the episode shared some final thoughts about the trumpet and trumpet players (see select quotes below). They listed favorite trumpeters who are thriving and flourishing today including Christian Scott, Joe Magnarelli, Alex Sipiagin, Avishai Cohen, Sean Jones, Arielle Besson, Etienne Charles, and Ingrid Jensen. Additional present-day saxophonists mentioned by the episode narrator were: Ambrose Akinmusire and Marquis Hill.

"First of all, the trumpet, to me, is basically the voice of the band, the voice, you know, the leader, the head honcho most of the time, when it comes to the small group." Keyon Harrold

"The way that people are innovating is by playing who they are, playing their experience."
– Michael Rodriguez

"Miles Davis, as an artist, he changed music like 6, 7 times. Changed it. The innovators, those are the people that I respect on a whole other level. Because they're able to take seemingly something out of nothing and create something beautiful."

– Keyon Harrold

"Everybody is doing a great job at developing their artistry and taking it to the next level." – Jeremy Pelt

Further exploration

Have your students choose an era and/or musician from the episode and conduct research to create a written, oral, or multimedia presentation, including an explanation of why they chose this particular era or artist. They can discuss innovations of the era or by the musician and/or focus on the historical/social/political/cultural context of the time.

Here are some possible areas of focus:

- **Choose a musician and conduct research about their personal journey with jazz; how they began their musical careers; their main contributions to jazz history; the characteristics of their style; who their influences were and/or who they influenced.**
- **Provide an overview of one of the eras and look at how music is influenced by the historical, social, political, and/or cultural context of that time.**

In the episode, trumpeter Keyon Harrold mentioned some of the historical events and context happening in the 1960s and 70s that would have impacted jazz musicians during that era, as well as things that are happening in today's society. Use this quote as a basis for discussion about how these events effect jazz and other art forms.

"Currently, you think about things like Black Lives Matter, you think about protests, the elections and we think about everything that's influencing our thoughts. So back in the 60s and the 70s, we had Vietnam, we had President Kennedy, we had Martin Luther king, we had Malcom X, we had Civil Rights. We had many movements that actually made people think about different things." – Keyon Harrold

- **Think about specific historical or current events or social/political movements and how they might influence the evolution of music and musicians and/or other artists and art forms.**
- **Compare and contrast the historical context of different eras covered in the episode and how jazz was affected.**

In the episode, trumpeter Keyon Harrold described harmonic, rhythmic, instrumental, and other stylistic changes that were happening in jazz during the 1970s.

“At that time people were changing how they would approach chords, how they would approach rhythm, the drums were changing, the bass was changing, different kinds of instruments were being added, some electronic instruments... The medium might be funk, the medium might be whatever, so, these virtuosic musicians would take that and superimpose their harmonic knowledge over what the beat is.” – Keyon Harrold

- **What technological advancements (e.g., music recording technology) and instrumental additions (e.g., electronic instruments) impacted jazz during the time?**
- **Discuss how new technologies or access to new or different tools and materials impact artists and other professionals (e.g., visual artists, filmmakers, chefs).**

In the episode, trumpeter Michael Rodriguez described the playing of two of the jazz greats who emerged in the 1980s: Wynton Marsalis and Terence Blanchard. Use this quote as a basis for a discussion about how musicians create their own unique sound.

“(Wynton Marsalis and Terence Blanchard) were both steeped in the tradition and they were just fantastic trumpet players, played with a lot of fire and had beautiful sounds... Even though they both played the same model trumpet, they sound different. Terrence has his ow... distinguishable way of playing and sound. Same thing with Wynton. You hear Wynton and you can tell Wynton right away. Same thing with Terrance.”
– Michael Rodriguez

- **How do musicians create their own unique and original sounds on their instruments?**
- **What are some identifying characteristics of musicians or other types of artists that have a unique sound or style?**
- **Why is it important for artists to have knowledge about the history of their art form and a mastery of foundational techniques while also striving to create their own style and voice?**

Musicians in this Episode

Keyon Harrold, Freddie Hendrix, Jeremy Pelt, and Michael Rodriguez (Trumpet)