

SWING UNIVERSITY

Jazz at Lincoln Center

Professor: Vincent Gardner

Bebop Course Syllabus

This course takes a look and listen to one of the most influential components of jazz, which to this day impacts all jazz that came after it...Bebop! Together we are going to hear our way into two realizations that I came to a few years ago: First, Bebop was a distinct and stylistically separate musical revolution that changed the world of jazz at the time, and continues to influence the way jazz is played to this day. Second, although many claim to play Bebop, they are really playing Hard Bop!

Week 1: Setting The Stage – a survey of the music that existed prior to the emergence of Bebop, such as:

New Orleans Polyphonic Jazz
Jazz Age and Swing Era Dance Bands, including Sweet and Hot and Novelty
The corresponding vocalists and vocal styles from all of the above periods
A discussion of the social climate in America at the onset of the Bebop era, and how it affected and motivated the young Beboppers.

Week 2: Dizzy Day – all about John Birks “Dizzy” Gillespie, his contribution and impact on the emerging Bebop style, and his music.

Biographical Information
Musical Training/Influences
First meeting with Charlie Parker
Recorded history as a sideman, as a leader, and with Charlie Parker
His influence on the younger beboppers
The Dizzy Gillespie Big Band

Week 3: Bird Day

Biographical Information
Musical Training/Influences
Meeting Dizzy Gillespie and their subsequent partnership and breakup
Moving from Kansas City to New York and everything in between
His Heroin Addiction
The Charlie Parker Quintet
Charlie Parker and Strings
Characteristics of his compositions and solo style, and how it influenced everything that came after it.

Week 4: Monk/Bud/Tadd - Through the gift of their music, we have a discussion of the contributions of these three influential pianists including answers to the questions:

Why wasn't Thelonious Monk a Bebop pianist?

Was Tadd Dameron Bebop's most significant composer?

Week 5: Bebop Drumming/Bebop Rhythms, Interactions, and Compositions -

Deciphering the grammar and syntax of the new language, Bebop and the compositions used to tell its story. For those that might be weary of the musical requirements, neither this nor any other part of the course requires any musical training. You only have to be able to hear THAT something exists, but you don't have to be able to name it musically.

Week 6: Bebop vs. Hard Bop -

First, a summary of the entire course, taking note of all of the Bebop-specific language that was discussed and how it developed through the experiences of its practitioners. This followed by a discussion of the music that grew out of Bebop and is still played today, Hard Bop. Finally a question and a challenge: Is Hard Bop the same as Bebop? Can you hear the difference?

Occasionally, the course is given over 8 weeks instead of 6, and in that case Week 4 and Week 5 will be expanded and taught over two weeks each.