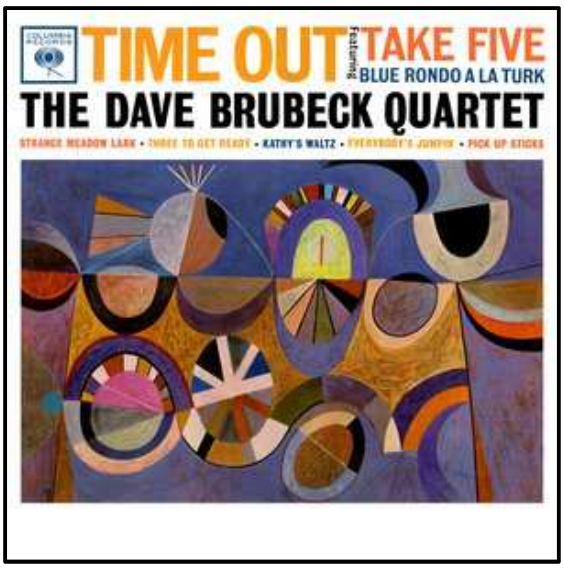
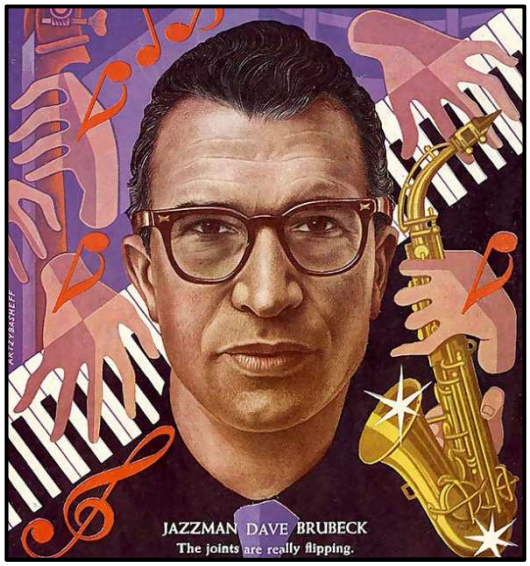
CHELTENHAM Festivals | Musicate

Take Five

Dave Brubeck Quartet, from the album *Time Out*

KEY INFORMATION





The great musician, composer and bandleader Dave Brubeck was born in Concord, California in 1920. His father was a cattle rancher and his mother a classically trained pianist. His parents had hopes of him becoming a vet; however it was clear that he was only destined for one thing – jazz, and he switched subjects at university.

Brubeck was famous for his daring experimental harmonies and creative use of odd time signatures, but he somehow always managed to keep his music accessible, which ensured its success and longevity. He loved learning from the music of other cultures, particularly after returning from a tour to many countries in Asia and Europe in 1958. These influences can be clearly heard on his album entitled *Jazz Impressions of Eurasia*.

Brubeck brought jazz to new audiences, particularly college students. In his later years he moved towards a more spiritual life, and composed a significant amount of choral sacred music which he felt could express parts of himself which the piano could not. However he maintained a successful career as a jazz pianist right up until his death at the age of 91 in 2012.

Released in 1959, Brubeck's ground breaking album *Time Out* was unlike anything that preceded it, and was the first jazz album to sell a million copies! The hit *Take Five* turned out to be one of the highest selling jazz tunes of all time. Brubeck had hired the inventive drummer Joe Morello in 1956. Morello's ability to accommodate Brubeck's unusual time signatures brought a new approach to performance, and a move away from Brubeck's 'cool' laid back west coast jazz style. *Take Five* was originally set as a piece of homework for Paul Desmond, the Quartet's wonderfully lyrical alto saxophonist. Brubeck had instructed him to compose a melody which would fit over Morello's catchy drum groove in 5/4 – and he did. What makes *Take Five* stand out is the distinctive piano figure introduction at the beginning of the piece; it also features a light, bluesy melody from Desmond, and a well-known drum solo in the middle. More than 40 versions of this piece have been recorded by other artists.

LISTEN

First listening – with/without sharing the name of the piece or composer.
Teacher/Musicat to choose whether to play whole piece or a specific section/s.

First impressions:

- What comes to mind immediately?
- What do you notice about the music eg tempo, dynamics, pitch; what about the rhythm?
- What about the instruments? Can you identify any of them?
- Where are the improvised sections? Can you here the soloist?
- How does the music change or develop?
- What do you imagine when you are listening to it?
- Does the music make you feel a particular way? (it doesn't matter if not).
- Do you have a favourite/least favourite part?

EXPLORE

INTRO

- What instrument kicks off the whole piece? Who then joins in?
  Drums begin, piano and bass enter with the vamp (a vamp is a repeated musical figure) in unison
- These three instruments are known as the **rhythm section**; they provide chords and rhythm for the melody instrument.
- Can you hear the Bassline – it is very simple *(low-high-low-high etc….)*
- Can you sing along with the intro if you put it on a loop?
- Listen to the pulse. (**It is steady, never changes; the piano anchors the pulse**.)

MELODY

If we listen to the melody the whole way through we can hear it is made up of two sections: the A section and the B section. The form of the whole piece is known as ABA.

- Can you spot where it changes section? What do you notice about each section? Do they each have specific qualities?
- Which instrument is playing the melody? (**Saxophone**) Can you hear long or short notes?
- What do you notice about the pitch in each section – does it change? Can you indicate where this happens using movement or a signal?
- Does the melody change in volume ie dynamics? (Dynamically there isn't a huge amount of variation – the way in which tension builds is via the creative use of space/pitch in the solos and the way in which it is filled.)
- The important thing to know about the A section is that it uses the sound of a **blues scale** – this is a very important part of jazz language. Can you learn the sound of the blues scale by singing the melody? How is the middle B section different? Can you hear that it is brighter? It has changed from a minor key to a major key, which creates a 'happier' sound.

SOLOS

- The Sax solo improvises over the A section only – and the drums improvise over the vamp.
  It is almost as if the piano takes on the role of the drummer by locking down the rhythm.
  The drum solo has lots of development rhythmically. The rhythm of the accents gives a sense of a conversation which sits well over the unwavering piano figure.

Things to think about here.

- What do you notice about the solos? Can you describe the qualities of the solo? Are the notes short/long/smooth/spiky/loud/soft/high pitch/low pitch/can you give them qualities/attribute describing words to them? Can you hear the pitch of the different drums? Listen closely!

DO

- 'Rhythm is an international language; it's the heartbeat that binds us all together.' (Brubeck)

RHYTHM EXERCISES - LEARNING TO DEAL WITH 5 BEATS IN A BAR!

- Use the instrument family document to explore the drum kit. Learn the different parts and how they sound. Can you recreate these sounds using your body and/or your voice? Ask your students to suggest as many sounds as possible.

- Develop this further by asking your students to **create their own drum beats** using these sounds. The drum solo is such a huge feature in this piece, so why not **create your own drum solo** using the Take Five backing track on the resources page?

- Can you **clap the pulse** – it moves quite fast. Try counting12345 along with it – this is tricky! So have a go at looping the vamp and maybe even slow it down if you have an app that can do this eg the *Amazing Slow Downer*. Does the pulse ever change speed?
  (You can develop this exercise by clapping on different beats, dropping in/out etc. – you could do odd/even numbers for example. Also have a go with a metronome – this sounds dry but can be fun! Be creative. Introduce a phrase to help you stay in time eg *'I LOVE DAVE BRU-BECK'*. Can the pupils to come up with their own little phrase?)

- Learn the piano figure rhythm/melody and bassline rhythm/melody too by creating. Split into three groups; add piano bass and clave and put all together.

- Learn the clave (the bell pattern) through simple clapping games. The word 'clave' means 'key' or 'code' in Spanish. So the clave is the 'key rhythm' in this piece.
  Claves are also a percussion instrument - two wooden sticks that are hit together to produce a rhythmic sound.
  See below for a step by step description of how to learn the clave. This is not as hard as it seems, I promise!

- Say and clap the pulse: '12345,12345,12345' round and round
- Then say: '1 and 2 and 3 and 4 and 5 and' but only clapping on the numbers.
- Now change the clapping rhythm so you only clap on the red bits: '**1** and 2 **and** 3 and **4** and **5** and' but you still say all of them!
- Once comfortable with the above see if you can clap the clave with the piece. Slow down if necessary.

- Check out **Mission Impossible** – it has the same CLAVE!! Repeat above steps with that for fun.

- Other tunes by Brubeck that have funny time signatures
  Do have a listen to these at some point: Blue Rondo a La Turk – 9/8; Far More Blue – 5/4; Un-square Dance – 7/4; Maori Blues 6/5; Blue Shadows in the Street - 9/8.

- Fyi 'Hey Ya!' by Outkast, and 'Money' by Pink Floyd are also written in the time signature of 5/4.

LEARN TO SING THE MELODY

- You may perhaps want to use Carmen McRae's version with lyrics here – even just the main bluesy line (A section) – it's a bit of a tongue-twister but a fun exercise! Or Al Jarreau also does a fun version too.
- If you learn the whole piece, why not split the class into two groups – one for each section
- Have a listen to other versions of the melody to reinforce/embed it further. See playlist spreadsheet for further suggestions.
- Can the students have a go at breaking down a bit of the melody and adding their own words?
- Using a Musicat it might be nice to have a go writing a blues to go along with a backing track.

OTHER THINGS YOU MIGHT LIKE TO DO

- Focus on the solos and do an exercise that compares them. See above in Explore. Imagine you are that soloist – can you write out a passage that describes how you might be feeling? Imagine the musicians are talking to each other - what sort of conversation might they be having? (As an aside – apparently they didn't like each other very much!)
- Compose a piece inspired by Take Five.
  It could use 5 elements or 5 instruments, be in 5/4 time, have 5 pitches or 5 sections, use the clave from the piece above. Perhaps you could relate this to a school topic? You and your pupils are bound to have lots of ideas.

- Art work – abstract painting – inspired by the piece. Imagine you are composing the album cover for Time Out. Have a look at Neil Fujita's cover.

- Imagine you are a journalist for Time Magazine. Write a review of Take Five and give your reasons

DID YOU KNOW??

- *Time Out* was an experiment! Brubeck's Quartet didn't expect it to be as successful as it was.
- Although best known for jazz, Brubeck also composed a lot of classical music, including ballet.
- On 8 November 1954 Dave Brubeck became only the second jazz musician (after Louis Armstrong) to make the cover of Time magazine (see page 1 – Jazzman Dave Brubeck)
- He studied music at university, but was nearly thrown out when the professors realised that he couldn't read music! He did learn to read music later.
- His piano playing may have saved his life in World War Two. Although he was in the army, he didn't fight in America's most deadly battle because he was playing in a show for the Red Cross!
- Brubeck was very good friends with Duke Ellington (also on our playlist)
- He wrote a musical called The Real Ambassadors, with Louis Armstrong (also on our playlist) as the lead character
- He injured his spine surfing in Hawaii, which altered the way he played the piano.
- Barak Obama is a massive fan. Recalling a 1971 concert Brubeck had given in Honolulu he said 'You can't understand America without understanding jazz, and you can't understand jazz without understanding Dave Brubeck.'
- May 4th is known as Dave Brubeck Day because of Take Five (5/4), as well as Star Wars Day *'May the fourth (force) be with you'*.
- Main Belt Asteroid 5079 Brubeck is named after him.
- The cover of the album is by Neil Fujita, a Hawaiian-born graphic designer best known for his innovative album and book covers