

Celisse Henderson: From Lizzo to Alicia Keys, Working with the Greats

National Standards: 7-8, 10-11

Celisse Henderson has performed and worked with some of the biggest names in music, from playing guitar during Lizzo's high-profile 2019 Saturday Night Live performance to writing alongside Alicia Keys. Today, Henderson is as busy as ever, but she wouldn't have it any other way. Her journey into being a professional musician is unique, as she comes from a musical family, but decided to pursue her dreams straight out of high school instead of attending a four-year university.

Henderson is also a huge fan of the great Sister Rosetta Tharpe and believes all musicians should be aware of Tharpe and her influence, much like everyone is aware of artists such as Bob Dylan.

Prepare

Have students watch some live performance footage from Celisse Henderson's Saturday Night Live performance with Lizzo. How does Henderson honor Sister Rosetta Tharpe in the performance? How does Henderson support Lizzo, while also taking center stage and "stealing the show" during the guitar-centric parts of the performance?

Key points in the article:

- Henderson grew up taking classical piano lessons and singing in her church choir, so music education is a big part of her upbringing. Henderson's father holds a double bachelor's degree in piano and vocal performance. Her mother has a double bachelor's degree in violin and vocal performance. Both parents also hold a master's degree in choral conducting.
- Henderson says Sister Rosetta Tharpe is the "bedrock of rock 'n' roll music, and the core of the majority of pop music we have right now is because of her influence." She sites how Muddy Waters and Chuck Berry all contributed to rock 'n' roll, but they were all influenced by Sister Rosetta Thorpe.
- A big part of success as a musician is being happy with where you are, while always pushing for more. "I think the career I have is where I go," Henderson says. "I'm going to continue to cultivate what I'm doing, which is a pretty robust career in a variety of facets."

Begin

Review vocabulary words from the article:

- **CHORAL CONDUCTING:** the skill and art of directing a musical performance, and in the case of choral conducting, a choir.
- **GOING VIRAL:** a video, image or something else gets shared rapidly on the Internet.
- **ICONIC:** well-established and widely recognized.
- **CULTIVATE:** to continue to develop a skill, quality or something else of value.

Discuss

Have students watch various clips of Celisse Henderson performing live throughout the years. (You can find some here: <https://www.youtube.com/user/CelisseMusic/videos>). Have them discuss how her playing style changes for each gig, and how she "plays for the song." What's their favorite version of

Henderson's playing? Have they noticed Henderson even improving as the years go on, comparing older clips to clips from today?

Something performers often take for granted is confidence. How does Henderson's confidence as an artist and performer shine through on the stage? How does her confidence influence her stage presence and relationship with the audience?

Ask

- Why did Henderson decide to go right into performance after graduating from high school? What are some of the benefits of going to college first?
- How did Henderson get introduced to music? She started taking classical piano lessons at a young age. How do you believe that helped her ability to learn multiple instruments later in life?

Questions

1. What is Henderson's main performance guitar?
2. What was Henderson's first big job out of high school?
3. On which television show did Henderson perform with Lizzo?
4. Henderson's parents have music degrees in which areas?
5. Aside from guitar and singing, what other instruments is Henderson trained in?
6. What's the name of Alicia Keys' initiative bringing together females in the music industry?
7. Where did Henderson first meet Brandi Carlile?
8. Which musician is Henderson touring with next summer?

Answers

1. Henderson's main guitar is a 1963 Gibson Custom Shop SG, which looks very similar to Sister Rosetta Thorpe's famed '61 that's being reissued. She's also working on a signature Gibson.
2. Being cast in the ensemble of "Wicked."
3. Saturday Night Live
4. Henderson's father holds a double bachelor's degree in piano and vocal performance. Her mother has a double bachelor's degree in violin and vocal performance. Both parents also hold a master's degree in choral conducting.
5. In addition to guitar and singing, Henderson is also trained on violin, piano, ukulele, bass and drums, as well as percussion and brass instruments.
6. Alicia Keys' "She Is the Music" initiative.
7. They met at the Newport Folk Festival in Newport, Rhode Island.
8. Brandi Carlile.

Expand

Ask students to discuss some artists who have supported pop acts on the road. How do these artists support the main act while also performing to their greatest abilities and taking their own moments to shine? How does Henderson do so in the various clips of her performing as a supportive lead guitarist? Have students name some of their other lead guitarists and instrumentalists that back pop artists, or are even lead guitarists in rock bands. How do they all support the vocalist with their playing

Learning New Songs: How to Play Bastille's "Pompeii"

National Standards: 1-9

Bastille, features a core group of four guys, but they often highlight different versions of the same song, adapted to the ensemble and situation they're playing in. This month's song from Bastille, "Pompeii," is a great example of how a song can be performed differently in live and studio situations, and offer something very novel for the audience.

Prepare

Have students listen to "Pompeii," the original record and the two live versions discussed in the article: one from Isle of Wight Festival, and the other from their acoustic performance at British Museum in London. Have students familiarize themselves with the basics of the song, such as the tempo (128 BPM) and key (A).

Key points in the article:

- A song and a record are not the same thing. A record embodies a song. There are certainly multiple ways to arrange a good song.
- When arranging a song, remember that you're honoring the song. Do whatever you have to do to present the song in a way that your audience enjoys it.
- You can use your creativity to make an arrangement of a song any way you like.

Begin

- Using the beginning of the lesson, analyze the original record. How does the lead vocal compliment the bass drum part and bass playing long notes in the middle register? How does the pre-chorus bring the listener into the chorus and add momentum to the song? How do the drums, which enter during the chorus, bring a distinct groove and beat to the song?
- Next, focus on the live versions of the song. They couldn't be more different.
- In the live version of the song from the Isle of Wight Festival, the keyboard loop is replaced by a Wurlitzer Electric Piano sound played on a synth, and the low vocal part is sung by the band. It's a super plugged-in, pop-friendly version of the song that adds a new style to the mix.
- In the other live version, performed at the British Museum in London, the song is performed just with guitar and the drummer keeping playing time on his body while the other band members sing, clap, and stamp their feet. What a unique performance! Have students seen anything like this before?

Review vocabulary words from the article below:

- COVERED: "covered" means it's been made into a new record by a different artist.
- RECORD: a record embodies a song.
- LIVE VERSION: a performance of a song, recorded live as the artist or group performs it onstage.
- DISTINCTIVE: a unique characteristic of one person or thing, so making it different from others.
- ELECTRONICALLY: via electronic equipment or devices.

Discuss

What other ways can students envision this song performed live? The two live versions of the song show how different arrangements can turn this tune into something completely different. What about a version without vocals? What instrument, or instruments, could perform the vocal melody in place of the vocals? Discuss other examples of ways to perform this song with instruments not employed in the original record.

Questions

1. What is a record, in relation to a song?
2. How many times has "Yesterday" by the Beatles been covered?
3. How many times has "White Christmas" by Irving Berlin been covered?
4. Where is the group Bastille based?
5. The core of the group is how many people?
6. In what key is Bastille's "Pompeii" recorded?
7. Where was the acoustic, live version of Bastille's "Pompeii" recorded, which we featured in this lesson?

Answers

1. A record embodies a song.
2. "Yesterday" by the Beatles has been covered over 2,200 times.
3. "White Christmas" by Irving Berlin has been "covered" over 500 times.
4. Bastille is from London, England.
5. The core group is four guys.
6. In the key of A.
7. It was recorded at the British Museum in London, where they were invited to see the Pompeii exhibit.

Expand

Divide students into small groups and have them experiment with different ways to play and present Bastille's "Pompeii." How can they perform the song differently than on the original record? What unique instruments can they use? Then, have them perform for each other and discuss how each group performed the song in a different way.

Protecting Your Hearing and Why It's Important for Musicians

National Standards: 1, 4-6, 10-11

Musicians have to be extra cautious about their hearing. Musicians are constantly around noise, and over time, sound at excessive levels can permanently and irreversibly damage hearing. That's why it's important for musicians to protect their hearing, and thankfully, today, we have the technology to help us do so.

Prepare

Have students discuss the different types of hearing protection they've used or seen employed by their favorite musicians. Have they used earplugs when going to concerts? If so, how often? Discuss the ways students are already protecting their hearing.

Key points in the article:

- There are various configurations of monitors that allow musicians to properly hear what's happening on stage. Proper monitor mix is vital.
- Three of the most common monitor configurations are public address speakers, stage wedges (individual speakers strategically placed around the stage) and in-ear monitors (speakers that sit right in the ear).
- Different types of hearing protection include expandable foam plugs, pre-molded reusable "musicians" plugs, ETYPlugs (high fidelity earplugs), canal caps and earmuffs.

Begin

Review vocabulary words from the article:

- **INTONATION:** the accuracy of pitch in singing or playing an instrument.
- **MELODY:** sequences of notes, collectively, that are musically appealing.
- **PHYSICS:** an area of science that explains properties of matter and energy.
- **THUNDERCLAP:** a loud crash of thunder.
- **SOUND ENGINEER:** a member of the music industry who deals with the technical aspects of acoustics for a musical performance.

Discuss

Have students discuss the various forms of hearing protection discussed in the feature. Which kinds have they used?

What are some challenges of performing live music and trying to preserve your hearing? What other ways can you save your hearing when going forward as a professional musician?

Expandable foam plugs are the most readily available options for hearing protection, but they won't be effective unless you insert them properly. It sounds simple, but can be tricky. Have students experiment with earplugs and see how much they impact what and how they can hear.

Questions

1. What are the five standard styles of hearing protection discussed in the feature?
2. The greater the distance, the _____ it takes for us to hear it.
3. Which travels faster: light or sound?
4. What are stage wedges?
5. What are in-ear monitors?
6. In what situation are stage wedges most useful?

Answers

1. Different types of hearing protection include expandable foam plugs, pre-molded reusable “musicians” plugs, ETYPlugs (high fidelity earplugs), canal caps and earmuffs.
2. The greater the distance, the longer it takes for us to hear it.
3. Light travels faster than sound.
4. Stage wedges are individual speakers strategically placed around the stage.
5. In-ear monitors are speakers that sit right in the ear.
6. Stage wedges are good for larger stages where musicians are more spread out.

Expand

Ask students to discuss a game plan for how they can keep their hearing safe right now, on a day-to-day basis. The next time they go to a concert, what precautions will they take? The next time they perform live, what tactics will they use to stay as safe as possible?

Watch footage of some live performances and look for in-ear monitors on the performers.

Horn Section Harmony

National Standards: 1, 4-6, 10-11

One way to give a song or band an instantly big sound is to add an exclusive horn section to the mix. Instruments such as saxophones, trumpets and trombones offer plenty of fullness and add spice to any music.

Prepare

Have students discuss some musicians, bands and songs that are enhanced by having a horn section. Some song examples from across the musical spectrum include Beyoncé and Jay-Z's "Crazy in Love," Ariana Grande's "Focus," Rod Stewart's "Infatuation," Led Zeppelin's "Kashmir" and B.B. King's "Same Old Story." How do the horns take the songs to the next level?

Key points in the article:

- When writing or arranging music for a horn section, one of the main questions is how to divide up the harmony between the instruments.
- Experiment with dividing up the harmony. Make informed choices about which notes each instrument should play, taking into account their musical effects.
- Try harmonizing the melody. Usually, notes of the melody and harmony are divided among the instruments from highest to lowest, but try switching up the order.
- Adding harmonized background riffs is a great way to add color and excitement to a song.

Begin

Review vocabulary words from the article:

- GRAVITY: Referring to the force that attracts an object to the center of the earth or another physical body with mass.
- MUSICAL SCALE: A graduated sequence of notes, intervals or tones. The tonal basis of music.
- VOICE LEADING: The art of creating harmonies with individual melodic lines or voices.
- MUSICAL ARRANGEMENT: A composition using different instruments or voices than what was originally specified.
- RIFF: A short, repeated section in music, often referred to in rock music in reference to "guitar riffs," but apparent in any musical genre.

Discuss

Have students discuss their favorite horn section harmonies. Artists mentioned in the article include Chicago, Tower of Power, Beyoncé, Duke Ellington and James Brown.

Play two of the songs mentioned in the article: Duke Ellington's "Mood Indigo" and James Brown's hit "I Got You (I Feel Good)." Have students discuss the horn section harmonies in the songs and how they employ the use of dividing the melody, harmonizing the melody and orchestrating riffs.

Questions

1. When we write or arrange music for a horn section, what's one of the primary questions we need to ask?
2. Duke Ellington's "Mood Indigo," composed by Ellington and Barney Bigard, is the trumpet melody on top, in the middle or on the bottom of the harmony?
3. Writing for horns involves many elements of music. Name two of the elements mentioned in the article.
4. When arranging for horns, chords are most often heard in _____ rather than root positions.
5. Name the three main instruments mentioned in the article that help comprise a horn section.

Answers

1. When writing or arranging music for a horn section, one of the primary questions is how to divide up the harmony between the instruments.
2. The trumpet melody is on top.
3. Elements include scales, chords, instrumentation, articulation, orchestration, composition, improvisation, transposition and song form.
4. When arranging for horns, chords are most often heard in inversions rather than root positions.
5. Saxophones, trumpets and trombones.

Expand

Have students practice playing Duke Ellington's "Mood Indigo" and James Brown's hit "I Got You (I Feel Good)," using the knowledge they learned after reading the article. Have them experiment with different harmonies, riffs and melodies. How can they make the songs their own?