

# Jazz Now: Profiles in Modern Jazz

## About this episode

This episode will introduce viewers to some of today's most dynamic, visionary jazz artists. In their own words, they'll share with us their personal stories, how they got started, how they were introduced to jazz, what inspired them to want to play professionally, who their teachers, role models and mentors have been, how they've negotiated various challenges and obstacles, and what they particularly love about life as a professional musician.

Each artist profiled has origins in different parts of the country and the world and were introduced to music, the joy of music-making and the sound of jazz at different stages in their development by a variety of caring individuals who nurtured their curiosity, offered access and exposure, and encouraged engagement and participation.

## Learning objectives

- Connect to contemporary jazz artists through hearing their personal journeys
- Learn about the various paths they've taken to becoming professional musicians
- Use the musician's stories as a springboard for discussions about curiosity, creativity, risk, self-confidence, hard work, passion, and the achievement of artistic excellence

## Preparatory activities

### What do you know?

Discuss the students' experience with music, in general, and/or jazz, specifically. What type of music do you listen to? When do you listen to music? How do you listen to music?

### Be on the lookout!

Prompt the students to listen for the featured musicians answering the following questions during the episode. Select a few questions from the list and/or assign different students to follow specific musicians as they watch the episode.

- What do you love about being a jazz musician?
- What don't you love about being a jazz musician?
- Do you subscribe to the belief that music is a calling and that you're doing exactly what you believe you were meant to be doing?
- What are your current goals and objectives in music?
- Are those goals or objectives different from what they may've been 5 or 10 years ago?
- What do you want audiences to take away from your performances?

## Exploration questions/activities

### Discuss/Explore the Episode:

- Which musician's story resonated with you and why?
- What were some of the different paths the musicians described to becoming a professional artist? Were there common experiences? Did anything surprise you?
- What does excellence mean to you?

During the episode, the musicians responded to a series of questions to share their personal and professional journeys. Their responses conveyed a unified sense of passion, commitment, and love of music.

Below is a selection of the questions from the episode followed by a quote from the musician(s) which can be used as a basis for discussions with your students about self-realization, commitment, the creative process, cultivating curiosity and passion, and striving for excellence.

### What do you love about being a jazz musician?

*It's just such an incredible blessing to do what you love. Even on the worst day, I'm like wow, I'm playing music. And every day is different. I'm meeting different people. I'm going to different places.*

—Endea Owens (24:25 in the episode)

- What is something that you love doing/are passionate about?
- How would you describe your commitment and dedication to it?
- What do you love about doing it?
- Can you imagine doing this for the rest of your life?

### Do you subscribe to the belief that music is a calling and that you're doing exactly what you believe you were meant to be doing?

*Even in 5th grade, (playing jazz) is what I'm connecting to, this is what I'm good at, this is what I like more than anything else. This is what I'm meant to do. I can't do anything else.*

— Alexa Tarantino (18:26 in the episode)

- What is something that you feel connected to?
- Is there something that you like so much more than anything else that you feel you were "meant to do it."
- How did you discover it or how were you introduced to it?
- When did you start doing it?
- How do you cultivate or nurture your interest/commitment/experience/skill?
- Who has encouraged or mentored you?
- Who are your heroes?

*Between feeling embarrassed, humiliated and invigorated all at the same time, I said, 'Man I've got to learn more about this stuff.' And that was what got me to say, 'I think this is really what I want to do.'*

— Carl Allen (17:54 in the episode)

- Have you experienced embarrassment or humiliation when learning or trying something new?
- How did you respond? Were you encouraged or discouraged?

*A friend of mine told me, if your dreams don't scare you, then you're not dreaming big enough. Your dreams should be so big that they scare you. So we have to allow ourselves to be able to think bigger.*

— Carl Allen, (34:17 in the episode)

- What does "dreaming big" mean?
- What does it mean to be scared of your dreams? Fear of failure? Fear of success?

## What do you want audiences to take away from your performances?

*The audience is a very important part of the music. They're the other half of what's happening. I love when I have a responsive audience. It means a lot. Really that's always been a part of the music from its inception. It's always been a give and take. It's always been a party."*

— Wayne Escoffery (36:50 in the episode)

*I only ask one thing when people come to a performance. It's to allow yourself to be in the moment. Allow for your life to be touched. Because that's what we're trying to do.*

— Carl Allen (37:08 in the episode)

*We strive to uplift people. Make them feel better. Even if it's just for the moment.*

— Freddie Hendrix (37:58 in the episode)

- Do you have opportunities to express yourself and be creative? How does it make you feel?
- Is it important and/or of interest to you to impact or uplift people and make them feel good? If "yes", why? If "no", why?
- Have you had an immersive experience as an audience member where you felt just as much a part of the experience as the performers?

## Further exploration

Have your students choose a musician from the episode and conduct research about them to create a written, oral, or multimedia presentation, including an explanation of why they chose this particular artist.

Explore other examples of individuals who are great at what they do (beyond the musicians featured in the episode).

- Name some artists who are great at what they do.
- How do you access and learn from passionate, high-functioning people who excel at something?
- If you could meet any of the artists in the episode, would you want to ask them a question? If "yes", what would you ask them?

## Summary

### Musicians in this Episode

Carl Allen (Drums); Jonathan Barber (Drums); Jeremy Dutton (Drums); Wayne Escoffery (Saxophone); Lawrence Fields (Piano); Marcus Gilmore (Drums); Keyon Harrold (Trumpet); Freddie Hendrix (Trumpet); Endea Owens (Bass) Lucas Pino (Saxophone); Michael Rodriguez (Trumpet); Alexa Tarantino (Saxophone); Camille Thurman (Saxophone); Manuel Valera (Piano) Miki Yamanaka (Piano)

### Audio Playlist

Refer to episode homepage online at [jazzreach.org](http://jazzreach.org)

### Suggested Resources

Refer to episode homepage online at [jazzreach.org](http://jazzreach.org)