

The Life and Music of Erskine Hawkins

Lessons 021 - 022

DATES Jan. 23 – Feb. 3, 2012 (2 classes)

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Each Music Technology student in the 2nd - 5th grades will receive one 30-45 minute lesson per week. The class structure is 'work-at-your-own-pace' because students are not required to have any materials or music equipment to participate.

Essential Questions: Who was Erskine Hawkins? What type of music was he famous for composing and performing? What is Tuxedo Junction?

Objectives:

- * Students will study the life of a famous jazz musician – Erskine Hawkins
- * Selected students will start working on 'Tuxedo Junction.'
- * Students will complete a quiz about Erskine Hawkins on our website.
- * Students will complete one or two pages in the Alfred Basic Piano Library Level 1A (varies based on student level).

Materials:

Alfred 1A Piano Books, keyboards and related equipment, computers with our website posted, recording of a composition and / or video by Erskine Hawkins viewed from the teacher's laptop and a projector, copies of Tuxedo Junction music.





Tuxedo Junction
by Erskine Hawkins, W. Johnson, J. Dash, B. Feyne

Medium Swing

(Introduction) Way down

5

South in Bir-ming-ham, I mean South in Al-a-bam's an old

Standards:

National MENC Standards:

- (2) Performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music.
- (6) Listening to, analyzing and describing music.
- (9) Understanding music in relation to history and culture.

TI:ME Technology Strategies:

- (4) Technology-Assisted Learning
- (5) Multimedia and Digitized media

Procedures:

- 1) The teacher will introduce information about Erskine Hawkins. Some of the sources include information from the Alabama Music Hall of Fame and various websites about Erskine Hawkins. The teacher will play a selection of music from Erskine Hawkins (Tuxedo Junction - MP3 - iTunes). Show a brief video clip of Erskine Hawkins from YouTube (advertising cut, filmed in 1938 – possibly Swinging in Harlem song).
- 2) The students will complete the 'Quiz on Erskine Hawkins' quiz on our website. <http://www.musictechteacher.com>. Record the grade for each student or have the student print the score if a printer is available. Students that receive a high score may get a reward (music pencil, stickers, buttons).
- 3) Selected students who are interested in playing more difficult music may start working on 'Tuxedo Junction' on the keyboard. This could be one of our selections to play for the All City Band Evaluation in April/May if students can play it well. Music handouts are available and the music is also posted in students' Noteflight accounts. We are also going to try and prepare this song for the **Black History Program** in late February.
- 4) Students will complete various pages in the Alfred Basic Piano Library Book 1 based on individual student progress. Video (digital camera) some of the students and post it immediately using the projector for review and feedback. They also may choose to play songs from our website (Flash piano practice pages).
- 5) If time allows, students may play some of the other quizzes on our website related to other jazz musicians. A Jazz Musician Help Page is available on the site to read about other jazz musicians and listen to clips of music by each musician. Students may also work on Sibelius or Noteflight music notation projects.

(continued)

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Evaluation...

- Students will answer questions successfully demonstrating knowledge about the life of Erskine Hawkins.
- Students will complete the Erskine Hawkins quiz with a score of 80 or higher.
- Students complete the assigned pages in the Alfred Basic Piano Book with understanding of concepts and performance of the songs for the teacher.
- Selected students will show an understanding of how to perform the first lines of 'Tuxedo Junction' on the keyboard.

Essential Questions: Who was Erskine Hawkins? What type of music was he famous for composing and performing? What is Tuxedo Junction?

Erskine Hawkins (1914-1993) was a famous jazz composer and trumpet player. One of the most famous recordings that Erskine Hawkins wrote and performed was 'Tuxedo Junction.' Tuxedo Junction was a street car crossing and a dance hall at the corner of 19th Street and Ensley Avenue in Birmingham.

From the Alabama Music Hall of Fame - "He drew on memories of a neighborhood nightspot for his classic big band standard "Tuxedo Junction," a jazzy number that became the most popular song of the World War II era. Hawkins was born in Birmingham in 1914, the son of a U.S. soldier who lost his life in military action during the first world war. The young musician began playing drums at the age of 7, moved on to the trombone, then decided at the age of 13 to play the trumpet. While attending the State Teachers College in Montgomery, Hawkins became leader of a band called the Bama State Collegians. The group traveled to New York City during the depression and generated funds used to help keep the institution afloat during its hard times. The band drew a strong public following, especially at the posh Savoy Ballroom. During the 40s and 50s, Hawkins helped discover several first-rate jazz musicians who drifted in and out of his band, including Paul and Wilbur Bascomb, Sammy Lowe, Haywood Henry and Avery Parrish. He also became one of the principal influences on a young rhythm and blues piano player named Ray Charles."

Extension:

- Use your Noteflight account to practice 'Tuxedo Junction' along with the keyboard.
- Make your own Erskine Hawkins quiz using Hot Potatoes software and the handout worksheets about Hawkins.
- Research additional information about Erskine Hawkins on the Internet. (Alabama Music Hall of Fame - <http://www.alamhof.org/erskinerhawkins.html>, All About Jazz.com - <http://www.allaboutjazz.com/php/musician.php?id=2677>).





Essential Questions for Lessons 21-22

Who was Erskine Hawkins?

What type of music was he famous for composing and performing?

What is Tuxedo Junction?





Tuxedo Junction in Ensley





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Erskine Hawkins (July 26, 1914-Nov. 11, 1993)

(<http://www.alamhof.org>) (www.allaboutjazz.com)

1989 Alabama Music Hall of Fame Inductee (Lifework Award)

1978 Alabama Jazz Hall of Fame Inductee

Birmingham, AL native Erskine Hawkins drew on his musical memories of a neighborhood nightspot when he composed the classic jazz standard "Tuxedo Junction," a bouncy big band number that would become one of the most popular tunes of the World War II era.

Hawkins' father was a soldier who lost his life in combat during World War I. Named after Alabama industrialist Erskine Ramsay, the young musician began playing drums at the age of seven, then moved on to trombone. At the age of thirteen, he decided to channel his talents into his true musical calling – the trumpet. At the height of the big band era, Hawkins' signature high-note trumpet inspired an appropriate musical nickname, "The 20th Century Gabriel."

Hawkins attended Industrial High School in Birmingham, where one of his instructors was J.T. "Fess" Whatley, an influential African American music teacher who trained many of the musicians who went on to populate jazz bands fronted by Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington and Skitch Henderson.

While attending Alabama State Teachers College in Montgomery, Hawkins became the leader and trumpeter for a band called the Bama State Collegians. In 1934, the group traveled to New York City during the Depression, generating much-needed funds to help keep the teachers college afloat during those times of economic hardship. The band went on to draw a loyal and enthusiastic public following during its high-profile engagements at the posh Savoy Ballroom.

(Hawkins, whose biggest influences were Louis Armstrong records, skipped out on one Bama State Collegians band trip to New Jersey so he could play some gigs in New York. At one of these early shows, Armstrong surprised him backstage at the Apollo Theater. From then on, whenever Hawkins came to New York, Armstrong would also take the stage at the Savoy Ballroom.)

The Bama State Collegians eventually evolved into the Erskine Hawkins Orchestra, with the group making its recording debut in 1936. With Hawkins and bandmate Dud Bascomb sharing trumpet solos, Paul Bascomb or Julian Dash on tenors, Haywood Henry on baritone and Avery Parrish on piano, the orchestra developed into a solid swing band that delighted jazz enthusiasts and swing dancers alike.

Hawkins' group scored three major jazz and pop hits during the World War II era (Tuxedo Junction, After Hours and Tippin' In). His orchestra's original recording of 'Tuxedo Junction' climbed to No. 7 on the charts in 1940, while the Glenn Miller Orchestra's version became even more successful, climbing all the way to No. 1. The song has been covered by Duke Ellington, Harry James, the Andrews Sisters, Stan Kenton, Quincy Jones, Chet Atkins, King Curtis, Floyd Cramer, Gene Krupa, Duane Eddy, Joe Jackson and Manhattan Transfer.

During the 1940s and '50s, Hawkins helped discover several first-rate jazz musicians who drifted in and out of his orchestra, including Avery Parrish, Haywood Henry, Paul and Wilbur Bascomb and Sammy Lowe, plus vocalists Ida James, Delores Brown and Della Reese. Hawkins' later recordings lean more toward rhythm-and-blues than jazz, and he became one of the chief musical influences on young R&B singer, songwriter and pianist Ray Charles.

(Hawkins' band was so popular that he was able to retain a permanent roster of players, most of whom were from Birmingham. The style was "down-home" and blues-inspired, but it could still swing and lay down a great dance beat. Two of his chief arrangers were pianist Avery "After Hours" Parrish and trumpeter Sammy Lowe.)

The Erskine Hawkins Orchestra continued recording and performing through 1953, scoring a Top 30 hit in 1948 with another of Hawkins' jazz compositions, "Gabriel's Heater." The group returned for a 1971 reunion album, Live at Club Soul Sound. Seven years later, Hawkins – who continued to play trumpet and perform live well into his 70s – became one of the first five artists inducted into the Alabama Jazz Hall of Fame in 1978. He died in Willingboro, New Jersey, at the age of 79.

Erskine Hawkins Music Quiz by Ms. Garrett (Hot Potatoes Quiz)

1. Erskine Hawkins was born in 1914 in _____.
A) New Orleans, LA
B) Memphis, TN
C) Birmingham, AL
D) Atlanta, GA
2. Erskine Hawkins was well-known for his compositions, leading bands and playing the _____.
A) Flute
B) Trumpet
C) Drums
D) French Horn
3. Hawkins attended Industrial High School in Birmingham, where one of his instructors was _____.
A) J.T. "Fess" Whatley
B) Louis Armstrong
C) Duke Ellington
4. While attending Alabama State Teachers College in Montgomery, Hawkins became the leader and trumpeter for a band called the _____.
A) Tuxedo Band
B) Bama Band Boosters
C) Bama State Collegians
5. One of Hawkins' most famous compositions was _____, referring to a dance hall and street car stop in Ensley, near Birmingham.
A) Sing, Sing, Sing
B) What a Wonderful World
C) Tuxedo Junction
6. Hawkins became one of the principal influences on a young rhythm and blues piano player named _____.
A) Ray Charles
B) Louis Armstrong
C) Count Basie
7. The Bama State Collegians later became the _____ when Hawkins and the band traveled to New York to perform.
A) Bama Nation Orchestra
B) Erskine Hawkins Orchestra
C) The Hot Five and Hot Seven Bands
8. Erskine Hawkins was nicknamed _____ because of his popularity as a band leader and high-note trumpet playing skills.
A) The 20th Century Gabriel
B) Satchmo
C) Jelly Roll
9. One of the biggest influences on Erskine Hawkins were records by _____.
A) Duke Ellington
B) Louis Armstrong
C) Benny Goodman
10. Erskine Hawkins died in _____ in New Jersey.
A) 1993
B) 1953
C) 2003
11. Erskine Hawkins was one of the first artists inducted into the _____.
A) Jazz Education Association
B) Country Music Association
C) Alabama Jazz Hall of Fame

-----Key-----

1. (C) 2. (B) 3. (A) 4. (C) 5. (C)
6. (A) 7. (B) 8. (A) 9. (B) 10. (A) 11. (C)