

From the Top!

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Suggested Grade Levels: K–6

Website

<http://www.fromthetop.org/>

WebVisit Objective

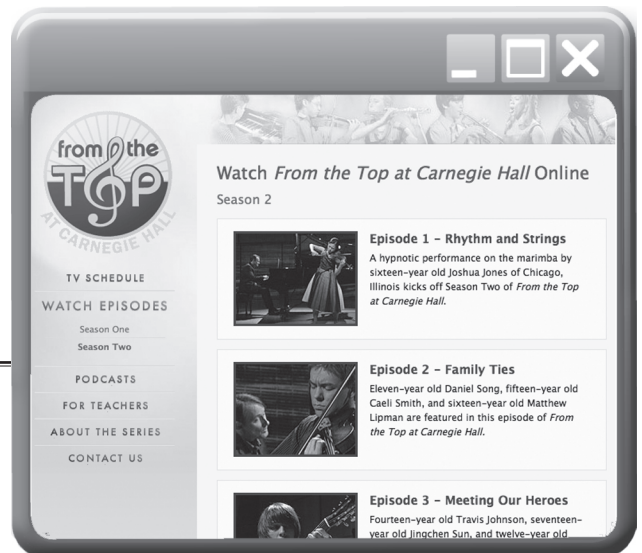
- Introducing students to jazz and scat singing.

Materials

- A presentation computer with Internet access, a projector, and a screen or an IWB

Overview

From the Top is the companion website for the fabulous PBS television show *From the Top at Carnegie Hall* and the NPR program *From the Top*, which showcase extraordinary young performers. Interviews with and performances by a wide variety of student instrumentalists and vocalists are broadcast each week. Many episodes include lesson ideas, which you can easily download from the site.



Preparation

- Go to <http://www.fromthetop.org/> and click on **PBS Television Program**. Next, click on **Watch Episodes on PBS.org**. Click on **For Teachers** in the left-hand menu and scroll through the amazing video topics that were chosen especially for classroom use. Some of the specific concepts that are addressed in these virtuosic videos are: program music; choreography; canon; improvisation; theme and variations; tempo; rhythm; melody; dynamics; composition; found sounds; classical, jazz, folk, and other styles of music; as well as social, emotional, and cultural aspects of music. Wow!
- Go back to the top and click on **educators' index** for a listing of composers, instruments, pieces, and genres for each episode of seasons 1 and 2. This index will be very helpful in planning out a year of inspirational WebVisits for your students. Many episodes are more appropriate for intermediate-aged students, but some will work for your primary students as well.

- Return to the top of the “For Teachers” page and click on **program pages** to see biographies of the performers as well as detailed lesson plans for your classroom. These plans can be downloaded as PDFs for your convenience. The plans are listed at the bottom of the program pages and also can be accessed by clicking on the titles under “Season 2 Educational Resources” on the “For Teachers” page.
- Before you teach this lesson, featuring “Old MacDonald” sung by a young jazz singer, go to <http://www.fromthetop.org/>. Click on **Watch Episodes on PBS.org**. Click on **For Teachers**, scroll down, and click on **Episode 10: We’ll Improvise**. Scroll down to “Activity Instructions” and read through the lesson plan so that you are prepared for conducting the WebVisit with your students.

Lesson Suggestions

1. Let your students know that you will be going on a WebVisit to hear an example of jazz music performed by a fourteen-year-old girl.
2. Proceed with the activity instructions 1 and 2 as provided on the site.
3. To watch the video, click on **Watch the Episode** and click on the following text under the video screen: **From The Top | Season 2 | Episode 10 - Music is Where the Heart Is: 14-year old Nikki Yanofsky**. Watch the amazing video with your students and enjoy this young lady’s beautiful voice, astounding flexibility, mature jazz stylings, incredible technique, and superb intonation. The video begins with a cute backstage clip and a nice interview with the performer.
4. Conclude the lesson by following the activity instructions 3 and 4 from the lesson provided on the website.

Extension Activities

- Play Ella Fitzgerald’s recording of “A-Tisket, A-Tasket” for your students. It can be found in many of the textbook series or downloaded from the Internet. Ask your students to identify the musical style. Inquire as to whether they heard Ella scat singing in this song.
- Use some of the following children’s books to reinforce the jazz experience:
 - *Bebop Express*, by H. L. Panahi
 - *Charlie Parker Played Bebop*, by Chris Raschka
 - *Ella Fitzgerald: The Tale of a Vocal Virtuosa*, by Andrea Davis Pinkney
 - *Ellington Was Not a Street*, by Ntozake Shange
 - *Hip Cat*, by Jonathan London
 - *Jazz*, by Walter Dean Myers
- Subscribe to the episodes. I subscribe to the television episodes via this website and the videos are downloaded straight onto my computer. To subscribe to these videos, go back to the main page for the television program (<http://www.fromthetop.org/content/pbs-television-program>) and click on **Watch Episodes on PBS.org**. On the left-hand side of the page, click on **Podcasts**. Choose between subscribing to the video podcast or the full-episode video podcast. Both are excellent. I subscribe through iTunes, but there are suggestions for other podcasting options if you click on **Where can I get free podcasting software?**