

The Life and Music of Bill Withers

Lessons 025 - 026

DATES Feb. 20 – Mar. 2, 2012 (2 classes – ThinkLink Testing and the Black History Program on 2-28-12 will affect some of the classes participating in music this week. This lesson may be delayed until the next week if needed.)

Lessons © www.musictechteacher.com / Ms. Karen L. Garrett

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.

Our students love the song 'Lean On Me' by Bill Withers. Most of the students recognized the tune, but did not know anything about the composer and original performances of the song.

Essential Questions / Ideas:

- Describe some of the events in Bill Withers' life that led him to become a composer.
- Name some of his most famous compositions.
- How did his music reflect the feelings or issues people faced in life?
- Do you think that it takes a lot of (hard) work to compose popular music today?

Objectives:

- * Students will study the life of a famous musician for Black History Month / Music In Our Schools Month – Bill Withers.
- * Selected students will practice 'Lean On Me' on the keyboard or other selections of music by Bill Withers.
- * Students will complete a quiz about Bill Withers on our website.
- * Students will complete pages in the Alfred Basic Piano Library Level 1A (based on student level) or older students will continue to work on practicing songs for the Black History Program performance on 2-28-2012.

Materials:

- Alfred 1A Piano Books, keyboards and related equipment,
- computers with our website posted,
- recording of a composition and / or video by Bill Withers viewed from the teacher's laptop and a projector, (video saved from YouTube with a performance by Bill Withers from 1972)
- Lean On Me by Bill Withers (elementary song arrangement for keyboard by Ms. Garrett)
- either a handout copy of the Bill Withers quiz or the interactive quiz posted on our website.

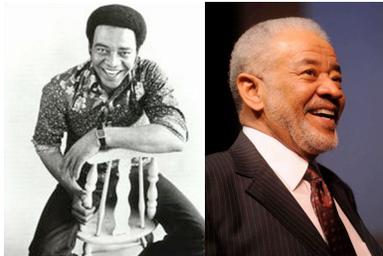
Standards:

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 teach students about the life and music of Bill Withers (born in 1938). Students may read aloud the information on pages from <http://www.umusicpub.com/catalog.aspx?id=4548> (Universal Music Publishing Group) and discuss some of the important facts and compositions about the composer.

2) Students will watch a brief video of Bill Withers performing the 'Lean On Me' song in 1972. (Video from YouTube saved to the teacher's computer. All YouTube advertising removed from the video.)



Lessons 025 - 026

DATES Feb. 20 – Mar. 2, 2012 (2 classes – ThinkLink Testing and the Black History Program on 2-28-12 will affect some of the classes participating in music this week.)

Lessons © www.musictechteacher.com / Ms. Karen L. Garrett

Procedures

3) Students who are new to the music technology class will learn to play the song, 'Lean On Me' from an arrangement by Ms. Garrett for elementary music students. The song uses half, quarter and eighth notes in two or three different sections, depending on student level. Some of the older students who have been working on this song previously will perform this arrangement in the Black History program on 2-28-2012. Video clips will be taken for students to review their performance.

4) Younger 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) Extra Work – Students may use the Hot Potatoes software program to create a quiz about the life and compositions of Bill Withers. They could look-up various websites about Bill Withers to create their questions for the quiz.

Older students - Continue practicing Tuxedo Junction / Lean On Me / We Shall Overcome for the Black History Program on Tuesday.

Essential Questions / Ideas

- Describe some of the events in Bill Withers' life that led him to become a composer. (He was raised by his mother and grandmother. After growing up and being in the Navy for a number of years, he moved to Los Angeles to pursue a music career while working at other jobs. His music was popular in both R&B and pop styles (genres) of music.

- Name some of his most famous compositions. (Lean On Me, Ain't No Sunshine, Just the Two of Us)

- How did his music reflect the feelings or issues people faced in life? (Withers wrote 'Lean on Me,' one of his most famous songs, based on his experiences growing up in a West Virginia coal mining town. Times were hard and when a neighbor needed something beyond their means, the rest of the community would chip in and help. The lyrics (words) of this song and others that he wrote described issues that people faced through life. Many composers write words to their music to tell a story or explain their feelings about life.)

- Do you think that it takes a lot of (hard) work to compose popular music today? (Yes! Composers spend many hours writing their music. It is difficult in the music industry today to get your music published and performed by musicians. Some songs become famous or 'classic,' while many others do not.)

Evaluation

- Students will be able to provide information about Bill Withers' life and compositions / complete a quiz / create a quiz based on their studies.

- Students will be able to play at least one or two sections of music from Lean On Me by Bill Withers (elementary arrangement).



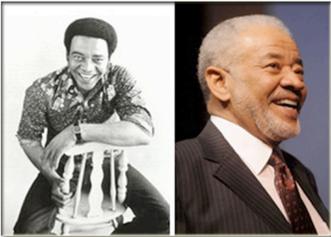
Essential Questions for Lessons 25-26

Describe some of the events in Bill Withers' life that led him to become a composer.

Name some of his most famous compositions.

How did his music reflect the feelings or issues people faced in life?





Lean On Me (Excerpt)
by Bill Withers

*Sometimes in our lives we all have pain
We all have sorrow, But if we are wise
We know that there's always tomorrow.*

*Lean on me, when you're not strong
And I'll be your friend I'll help you carry on
For it won't be long 'Til I'm gonna need
Somebody to lean on.*

Bill Withers (1938 -) was raised by his mother and grandmother. After growing up and being in the Navy for a number of years, he moved to Los Angeles to pursue a music career while working at other jobs. His music was popular in both R&B and pop styles (genres) of music.

Withers wrote 'Lean on Me,' one of his most famous songs, based on his experiences growing up in a West Virginia coal mining town. Times were hard and when a neighbor needed something beyond their means, the rest of the community would chip in and help. The lyrics (words) of this song and others that he wrote described issues that people faced through life. Many composers write words to their music to tell a story or explain their feelings about life.

Besides 'Lean On Me,' some of his other famous songs include 'Ain't No Sunshine' and 'Just the Two of Us.'

Our students love to play 'Lean On Me' on the keyboards! It is always a class favorite.

Lessons 025 - 026

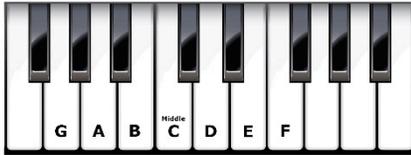
DATES Feb. 20 – Mar. 2, 2012 (2 classes – ThinkLink Testing and the Black History Program on 2-28-12 will affect some of the classes participating in music this week.)

Lessons © www.musictechteacher.com / Ms. Karen L. Garrett

Short Excerpt / Example

Lean On Me
by Bill Withers 1972

Yamaha PSR-E403
VOICE 046 (1 player on keyboard)
OR 009 (2 players on keyboard)
STYLE 075, TEMPO 80



G A B C D E F
LEFT HAND RIGHT HAND

Lean On Me (Single Version)

by Bill Withers

Sometimes in our lives we all have pain / We all have sorrow / But if we are wise / We know that there's always tomorrow.

Lean on me / when you're not strong / And I'll be your friend / I'll help you carry on / For it won't be long / 'Til I'm gonna need / Somebody to lean on

Please swallow your pride / If I have things you need to borrow / For no one can fill those of your needs / That you won't let show /

You just call on me brother, when you need a hand / We all need somebody to lean on / I just might have a problem that you'd understand / We all need somebody to lean on.

Lean on me, when you're not strong / And I'll be your friend / I'll help you carry on / For it won't be long / 'Til I'm gonna need Somebody to lean on.

You just call on me brother, when you need a hand / We all need somebody to lean on / I just might have a problem that you'd understand / We all need somebody to lean on.

If there is a load you have to bear / That you can't carry / I'm right up the road / I'll share your load / If you just call me /

Call me, if you need a friend / (Repeats and fades to end)

(Reading selection – next page)

Reading Selection About Bill Withers from the Universal Music Publishing Group By Ed Hogan

Songwriter/singer/guitarist **Bill Withers** is best remembered for the classic "Lean on Me" and his other million-selling singles "Ain't No Sunshine" and "Use Me," but he has a sizable cache of great songs to his credit. **Al Jarreau** recorded an entire CD of Withers' songs on *Tribute to Bill Withers* (Culture Press 1998). His popular radio-aired LP track from *Still Bill*, "Who Is He? (And What Is He to You?)," was a 1974 R&B hit for Creative Source.

Born July 4, 1938, in Slab Fork, WV, Withers was the youngest of six children. His father died when he was a child. He was raised by his mother and grandmother. After a nine-year stint in the Navy, Withers moved to Los Angeles to pursue a music career in 1967. He recorded demos at night while working at the Boeing aircraft company where he made toilet seats. His recording career began after being introduced to **Clarence Avant**, president of Sussex Records.

Stax Records stalwart **Booker T. Jones** produced his debut album, *Just As I Am* (with some co-production by **Al Jackson, Jr.**), which included his first charting single, "Ain't No Sunshine" that went gold and made it to number six R&B and number three pop in summer 1971 and won a Grammy as Best R&B Song. Its follow-up, "Grandma Hands," peaked at number 18 R&B in fall 1971. The song was later covered by the **Staple Singers** and received airplay as a track from their 1973 Stax LP *Be What You Are*. "Just As I Am" featured lead guitar by **Stephen Stills** and hit number five R&B in summer 1971.

Withers wrote "Lean on Me" based on his experiences growing up in a West Virginia coal mining town. Times were hard and when a neighbor needed something beyond their means, the rest of the community would chip in and help. He came up with the chord progression while playing around on his new Wurlitzer electric piano. The sound of the chords reminded Withers of the hymns that he heard at church while he was growing up. On the session for "Lean on Me," members of the **Watts 103rd Street Rhythm Band** ("Express Yourself," "Loveland") were used: drummer **James Gadson**, keyboardist **Ray Jackson**, guitarist **Benorce Blackman** (co-wrote with Withers "The Best You Can" from **Making Music**), and bassist **Melvin Dunlop**. His second gold single, "Lean on Me," landed at number one R&B and number one pop for three weeks on Billboard's charts in summer 1972. It was included on his *Still Bill* album, which went gold, holding the number one R&B spot for six weeks and hitting number four pop in spring 1972. "Lean on Me" has become a standard with hit covers by U.K. rock band **Mud** and **Club Nouveau**. "Lean on Me" was also the title theme of a 1989 movie starring **Morgan Freeman**. *Still Bill* also included "Use Me" (gold, number two R&B for two weeks and number two pop for two weeks in fall 1972).

Withers' Sussex catalog also included *Bill Withers Live at Carnegie Hall*, *Justments*, and *The Best of Bill Withers*. Withers contributed "Better Days" to the soundtrack of the Bill Cosby 1971 western *Man And Boy*, released on Sussex. There was a duet single with **Bobby Womack** on *United Artists*, "It's All Over Now," from summer 1975.

After a legal battle with Sussex, Withers signed with Columbia Records. Columbia later bought his Sussex masters when the label went out of business. Withers was briefly married to actress **Denise Nicholas** in the early '70s. His releases on Columbia were *Making Music* ("Make Love to Your Mind," number ten R&B), which hit number seven R&B in late 1975; *Menagerie* ("Lovely Day," a number six R&B hit), which went gold in 1977; and *Bout Love* from spring 1979.

Teaming with Elektra Records artist **Grover Washington, Jr.**, Withers sang the crystalline ballad "Just the Two of Us," written by Withers, **Ralph MacDonald**, and **William Salter**. It went to number three R&B and held the number two pop spot for three weeks in early 1981. Withers teamed with MacDonald for MacDonald's Polydor single "In the Name of Love" in summer 1984.

Withers' last charting LP was *Watching You, Watching Me* in spring 1985. He occasionally did dates with Grover Washington, Jr. during the '90s. His songs and recordings have been used as both the source of numerous covers (**Aaron Neville's** "Use Me") and sampled by a multitude of hip-hop/rap groups.

Licensing Contact Information

In The US Contact

Universal Music Publishing Group
Film and TV Department
2440 Sepulveda Blvd. Suite 100
Los Angeles, CA 90064-1712

Phone: 1-310-235-4721

Fax: 1-310-235-4905

Email: licensing.umpg@umusic.com

For all other territories:

Contact the local UMPG office. See our [Worldwide Directory](#) for contact information.

Rondor Music International, Inc. d/b/a Almo Music Corp./Irving Music, Inc.
a Universal Music Group Company

Synchronization Department

2440 Sepulveda Blvd. #119

Los Angeles, CA 90064-1217

Ph: 1-310-235-4800 / Fax: 1-310-235-4801