



University of Louisville  
Belknap Campus

School of Music

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## THOUGHTS ON STARTING A JAZZ PROGRAM

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Remember the old movie plot where the ingenious individual says "lets put on a show" and everything falls into place. We all know it just is not that simple. Starting or expanding a jazz program for the typical band director is like that improbable movie plot. It is not as simple as getting the students together and counting off a tune. Many areas will need to be considered and addressed. For the first time the director could be confronted with a style of music that he or she might not have any experience with, much less training. The task may seem overwhelming; however, the results can reap rewards that will benefit everyone involved.

The teaching of jazz and improvised music has developed greatly over the past twenty-five years. And yes, an individual can be taught to play in a jazz style and even improvise. Once viewed as an after school activity to appease the restless members of the band, a quality jazz experience can be an invaluable teaching tool for orchestra and chorus students as well as the entire band. It is no longer enough to just play old dance charts. Today's music educator must be able to teach improvisation in addition to conducting a 'tight' ensemble. The teaching of jazz is becoming another skill that music educators must have in order to give our students a well rounded musical experience.

Whether working with middle school, high school or college jazz bands, it has been my experience that common concerns and problems will occur. While every director will have special skills, each program will have weaknesses and needs that will play a factor in the direction and scope of their particular jazz offerings. Many of these areas will pose little or no problems while others will need to be handled as the program matures and takes shape.

The following is an outline of areas that I believe will need to be considered when starting a jazz ensemble at any educational level. If you have a jazz ensemble or are considering starting one I encourage to take a moment and consider these points.

### 1. Attitudes

- A. How do you, the director, view jazz? Can it be taught? How will it benefit your students?
- B. What are your student's attitudes towards jazz?
- C. What is your administration's attitude?
- D. How will your band parents view a jazz band?

## 2. Experience, Limited Knowledge

- A. How much experience do you have playing jazz?
- B. Have you participated in a jazz clinic or workshop?
- C. Can you improvise (you don't have to be another Charlie Parker or Miles Davis)?
- D. Are you willing to learn to improvise with your students?

## 3. Direction

- A. Will your main interest be in rehearsing the ensemble? If so, how will you deal with the improvised solos?
- B. Will improvisation be emphasized? How will the ensemble be rehearsed?
- C. If the approach is to be a balance of ensemble and individual improvisation, how will this be accomplished?

## 4. Educational Offering

- A. Is the jazz band to be viewed mainly as entertainment for school functions?
- B. How can the jazz ensemble be as educationally rewarding as the band, orchestra or chorus?
- C. How can the material be varied to cover a variety of styles?

## 5. Listening, Points of Reference

- A. Do you have access to jazz recordings, i.e. the Smithsonian Collection of Classic Jazz?
- B. Are there jazz concerts in your area?
- C. How can you get students to listen to all types of music?

## 6. Instrumentation

- A. Traditional or standard big band (5 saxes, 4-5 trpts, 4 bones, piano, bass, guitar, drums).
- B. If you have limited instrumentation consider:
  - 1. Combo (various combinations).
  - 2. Play-along Records.
- C. Combination of all three for the most effective, yet time consuming, approach.

## 7. Funding

- A. Will the jazz band be part of the regular band budget or will you have additional funds?
- B. How much should you spend for:
  - 1. Music. Where do you find charts? Can you borrow music?
  - 2. Piano/Keyboard if unavailable at school.
  - 3. Guitar and bass amps. Use student amps?
  - 4. Drum Set. Use student set?
  - 5. Odd Instruments (Bari, Soprano Sax, Flugelhorn, etc.)

## 8. Rehearsal Time

- A. Can you schedule an in-school rehearsal?
- B. Do you have time and would your students attend a before or after school rehearsal?

- C. When do you start the group? After football season or from the start of school?
- D. If not an in-school rehearsal, how long will the group rehearse?

#### 9. Selection of Music

- A. Where do you find quality music?
- B. How do you establish a library from scratch?
- C. What type of music do you choose:
  1. Traditional
  2. Pop/Rock
  3. Originals
  4. Commissions
- D. Will improvisation be a consideration when choosing material? If so, how will you determine what to purchase?

#### 10. Teaching Improvisation

- A. Are you willing to spend valuable rehearsal time teaching all students to improvise?
- B. Are you willing to work or even learn to improvise yourself?
- C. Are you familiar with the various approaches one can use when teaching improvisation?
- D. Do you have the opportunity to attend clinics and/or workshops dealing with the teaching of jazz and improvisation.

#### 11. Additional Assistance

- A. Grants.
  1. National Endowment for the Arts.
  2. Kentucky Arts Council.
  3. Local arts assistance.
- B. Artist-in-Residence Programs.
  1. Local musicians.
  2. Visiting artists/educators.
- C. Musicians Union.
  1. Concerts.
  2. Local musicians.

Two excellent articles recently appeared in mainstream music magazines. The February 1991 issue of the Music Educators Journal featured an article by Antonio J. Garcia titled Fine-Tuning Your Ensemble's Jazz Style. Mr. Garcia discusses how young musicians can become familiar with the basic elements involved with performing jazz convincingly. Another insightful article ran in Band Directors's Guide's (BDGuide) November/December 1989 issue entitled The Jazz Band. Seven outstanding jazz educators offer insight into their own particular areas of performance. These articles can offer valuable assistance.

I also would like to encourage you to join the International Association of Jazz Educators. IAJE has been and continues to be on the forefront of jazz education, embracing all styles, types and forms of America's music. The Jazz Educators Journal, published four times a year, is an essential resource for the educator interested in teaching jazz and improvisation.

Finally, if I can ever be of assistance please feel free to contact me at the University of Louisville School of Music (502 588-6032).



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Acquiring quality teaching material is an important first step in establishing a jazz program. The following partial list contains many of the leading publishers of jazz educational material. Each is active in sending information regularly and most have recordings of their catalog available to assist in the selection of music.

If you have any questions or need additional assistance feel free to contact Mike Tracy at the University of Louisville 502 588-6032.

**JAZZ ENSEMBLE  
Music/Arrangements**

Advanced Music Company  
P.O. Box 11267  
Glendale, CA 91226-7267  
Tel: 818 242-2093

William Allen Music, Inc.  
P.O. Box 790  
Newington, VA 22122  
Tel: 800 WM ALLEN  
Fax: 703 550-2503

Argus Publishing, Inc.  
P.O. Box 806  
Maywood, NJ 07607  
Tel: 201 342-3476

C.L. Barnhouse Company  
P.O. Box 680, 205 Cowan Avenue  
Oskaloosa, Iowa 52577

Doug Beach Music/KJOS  
Neil A. Kjos Music Company  
San Diego, CA 92117

Classic Editions  
King Brand Products, Inc.  
333 West 52nd Street, Suite 1400  
New York, NY 10019  
Tel: 212 246-0488

Concept Music  
6705 N. Lamar, #251  
Austin, TX 78752  
Tel: 512 443-4445

Fanfare Music Services  
201 Dartmouth Place  
Costa Mesa, CA 92626

Fault Line Productions/Steve Owen  
P.O. Box 23202  
Eugene, OR 97402-0426  
Tel: 503 343-9763

Lou Fisher Music Publishing, Inc.  
31753 Ponderosa Way  
Evergreen, Co 80439  
Tel: 303 670-1661

Jobar Music/Mike Barone  
P.O. Box 66  
Carbondale, CO 81623  
Tel: 303 963-0806

Karleigh Music Company/Alf Clausen  
P.O. Box 5200  
Sherman Oaks, CA 91413-5200

Kendor Music, Inc.  
Vanguard Series  
Main & Grove Streets  
P.O. Box 278  
Delevan, NY 14042  
Tel: 716 492-1254  
Fax: 716 492-5124

Jazz Heritage Publications  
P.O. Box 7043  
Alexandria, VA 22307-0043  
Tel: 703 780 3613

Laizzez-Faire Music  
Publishing Company  
810 N. Cumberland  
Lebanon, TN 37087  
Tel: 615 444-2570

Hal Leonard Publishing Corp.  
Jenson Publications  
7777 West Bluemound Road  
P.O. Box 13819  
Milwaukee, WI 53213  
Tel: 800 422-2521  
Fax: 414 774-3259

Machu Picchu Productions/  
Ladd McIntosh  
7712 Alcove Avenue  
North Hollywood, CA 91605  
Tel: 818 764-7776

David Metzger Music  
2729 Lytelle Place  
Los Angeles, CA 90065  
Tel: 213 254-5233

Roger Myers  
P.O. Box 56669  
Riverside, CA 92517  
Tel: 714 686-7473

Pender's Music Company  
314 South Elm  
Denton, TX 76201  
Tel: 800 772-5918  
Fax: 817 382-0869

Sierra Music Publishing  
P.O. Box 543  
Liberty Lake, WA 99019  
Tel: 509 255-6551

UNC Jazz Press  
Jazz Studies Program  
University of Northern Colorado  
Greeley, CO 80639  
Tel: 303 351-2577

Union Dues Music Publishing  
250 Sund Avenue  
Ben Lomond, CA 95005  
Tel: 408 336-8883

Walrus Music Publishing  
P.O. Box 11267  
Glendale, CA 91226-7267  
Tel: 818 242-2093  
Fax: 818 242-7704

Gregory W. Yasinitsky  
NW 1800 Hall Drive  
Pullman, WA 99163  
Tel: 509 332-2754

IMPROVISATION  
Records/Books

Jazz Aids - Jamey Aebersold  
P.O. Box 1244C  
New Albany, IN 47250-1244  
Tel: 800 456-1388  
Fax: 812 949-2006

Sher Music Company  
P.O. Box 445  
Petaluma, CA 94953  
Tel: 800 444-7437

JAZZ MATERIALS  
Various Publishers & Ensemble Size

Mannerino Sheet Music  
7605 Hamilton Avenue  
Cincinnati, OH 45231  
Tel: 800 543-1721

Marina Music Services  
P.O. Box 46159  
Seattle, WA 98126  
Tel: 800 331-4528  
Fax: 206 938-0669

Meadow Creek Music  
P.O. Box 18262  
Louisville, KY 40218  
Tel: 502 451-5313  
Fax: 502 454-3041

Stanton's Sheet Music  
330 South 4th Street  
Columbus, OH 43215  
Tel: 614 224-4257  
Fax: 614 224-5929

COMBO  
Music/Arrangements

Kam Music Publishing  
3341 Towerwood Drive  
Suite 206  
Dallas, TX 75234

Scott Reeves  
Box 3 Road 5  
Falmouth, ME 04105  
Tel: 207 878-3977

SFM  
Second Floor Music  
130 West 28th Street, 2nd fl.  
New York, NY 10001-6108  
Tel: 212 741-1175  
Fax: 212 627-7611

Bobby Shew  
6900 Calhoun Avenue  
Van Nuys, CA 91405  
Tel: 818 781-6660