

Art of the Big Band- Part 2

The Jazz Ensemble

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CONCEPTS

I. Time and Rhythm (Rhythmic Material)

- Rhythm Packet use (sing & dance everyday) / Rhythmic feel / Swing feel
- Rhythmic language - “Time Train” - constant movement and attitude-infused singing that reinforces the jazz articulation
- Quarter notes (Daht-n), Eighth notes (Dah-dah/du-vah), Triplets (Doo-dle-AH)
- Incorporate instruments eventually - *this is the language for their improvisation - the weakest component of young solos/ensemble playing is RHYTHM*

II. Improvisation and Jazz Theory (Melodic Material)

- Rhythm Section role / beat placement / role of piano, bass, guitar, drums
- Comping chords / voicings / registers (see Part 1 handout)
- Two-bar blues dictations (teacher & advanced student demonstrated) Are you, as the teacher, able to do this? / Style, soul, spirit
- Chords & Chord Scale arpeggios and patterns (Maj7, Dominant 7, Minor 7, Bebop scales / collective improvisation / vary styles / “sha-doodle-ah”
- ii-7/V7/I maj7 rhythm section & band activity / collective improvisation / vary styles

Align and tailor all above material to your curriculum - see attached FHS curricula

III. Rehearsal Strategies

Vine Street - Benny Carter

- Air-speed/tonguing - The difference between amateurs/professionals is speed of air and how hard they articulate - ex. m17-49
- Balance within section - vertical vs. horizontal - stacked levels of volume/duration of notes - ex. m33 brass
- Unison vs. Harmony - ex. M77 tbone
- Jazz phrasing/style - ex. soft/full shout

Rockabye River - Duke Ellington

- Phrasing (swallowing/ghosting) - ex. Sax beginning
- Mute concepts/unison vs. harmony - ex. Brass beginning

- Horizontal couplings and shaping of phrase (experiment with alternate seating) - ex. Shout chorus

St. Louis Blues - W.C. Handy, Duke Ellington

- Inflection, interpretation, soulfulness, internal phrase shape, vibrato as a tool for swing - ex. Shout chorus

IV. The Jazz Culture & Intangibles

- Create and cultivate a program where students deeply invest in the great American artform of Jazz. The study of jazz puts us in contact with the mythic substance of human history. It allows us to assert our collective humanity through community, and is the definitive artform of the democratic sentiments of our country.
- Pass ownership of the music to the ensemble - encourage extra sectionals, listening of recordings, and attendance to live jazz performances
- Tap into and train the dormant leadership of students in your jazz program - When you see someone's potential, you're really just seeing what you would do if you were them. Encourage them to "give back"!

V. The Foxboro Schedule

- 2 jazz bands / 2 jazz choirs - alternate days - MWF JE / TuTh JLB
- Jazz Ensemble - Sax/Tpt/Tbone sectionals before school 6:45-7:25, Rhythm 5:30-7:00pm
- Jazz Ensemble night rehearsal - Weds. 7:00-9:30pm
- Middle School Jazz Band - Tu/Th after school 2:30-3:30pm
- Foxboro Improvisation Workshop - June 24-28, 9:30am-3:00pm (15 faculty)
- Guest artist residencies twice per year

If there is anything I can do to help you or your students, please reach out! You're always welcome to observe, sit in, or attend any Foxboro performances.

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What can I do in my next rehearsal?

I. The Warm Up

- Time Train / Rhythm Packet singing and dancing - page by page, incorporate instruments
- Cycle of 4ths chord/chord scale for Maj 7, Dominant 7, Minor 7, Bebop scales (6th & 7th)
- Air support, tone production, MP buzzing, blend, balance, intonation, transparency with rhythm section (in varying styles)
- Teaching jazz standards by ear, teaching melodies of curriculum tunes by ear

II. Chord Improvisation

- Play changes in music (one at a time to start) - vary style, tempo, historical period
- Blues / I-IV relationship to include guide tones - vary style, tempo, historical period
- Expand to larger forms (16/32 bar song forms, extended forms, rhythm changes, modal tunes) using previous concepts
- In collective improvisation:
 - Motivic development, repetition, vocal inflections, scat singing
- Adjust style, soul, spirit to fit the mood of the chart

III. Ensemble Playing

- Concept of aggressive articulation - jazz is music of *accent*. Tongue harder and use more air!
- Section balance in terms of *horizontal* part relationship - ex. Trumpet 1-4, etc.
- Ensemble balance in terms of *vertical* part relationships - ex. Tpt. 1/Alto 1/Trombone 1, etc.
- Woodwind doublings and brass mutes
- Phrase shaping, internal dynamics, phrase goal objectives leading to chart goal objectives
- Role of lead voices - empower them to set the interpretation and musically demand the section follow through consistency