Effective jazz pedagogy: A perspective on jazz ensemble rehearsal techniques

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Abstract

The inclusion of jazz ensembles within extra-curricular instrumental music programs in secondary schools in Australia has grown exponentially in the past two decades. Despite this growth, there is a deficiency of specialist teacher training in jazz education and pedagogy in Australian tertiary institution instrumental music courses. This lack of specialist training in jazz pedagogy has left many music educators, especially early career instrumental music teachers, underprepared and underequipped to teach jazz programs successfully in their junior and secondary school settings. This article aims to synthesise and contextualise some of the key literature in jazz pedagogy and jazz ensemble rehearsal techniques for early career teachers, or those with little or no background in jazz. The topics discussed in this article include roles of instrumentation, rehearsal and performance set-ups, rehearsal techniques, the role of the jazz director, directed student listening, jazz style, language and articulation, improvisation, and repertoire. The aim is to equip instrumental music teachers with an introductory knowledge, reference to further literature, and practical examples to maximise the proficiency and potential of their jazz ensembles in junior and secondary school music programs.

Key Words: jazz education, jazz pedagogy, jazz ensemble instruction

Introduction

Jazz education, and particularly the inclusion of jazz ensembles[1] within extra-curricular programs in secondary schools in Australia, affords students important fundamentals in the development of a holistic instrumental music education. The number of jazz ensembles in Australian school music programs has increased exponentially in the past two decades. Fortunately, music education curricula globally have progressed from negative attitudes towards jazz studies, to now arguing for its inclusion as part of a rounded music education. Even so, there is still much work to be done in this space. Despite the proliferation and growth of jazz ensembles in music programs, and the growing requirement for instrumental music teachers to direct these groups, specific instrumental music teacher training in jazz education and pedagogy is still not considered prerequisite learning in many Australian tertiary institutions for pre-service instrumental music students. Hitherto, a lack of understanding of jazz pedagogy has left many music educators, especially early career teachers, underprepared and underequipped to teach jazz successfully in their junior and secondary school settings.

As a jazz musician and educator, I have also observed such difficulties even amongst more experienced music educators. Over years of adjudicating eisteddfods and music festivals, and running clinics and workshops with jazz ensembles throughout Australia, I have observed that it is common for music educators to often take a haphazard approach to directing their jazz ensembles. Many of these educators come from tertiary programs which focus on concert band and string ensemble pedagogies and neglect jazz and popular ensemble training. Consequently, many music educators face their jazz ensembles with little understanding, preparation, or expertise in

1 The terminology 'jazz ensemble' is used throughout as a general term to refer to any combination of large jazz group, such as big band, stage band, or jazz orchestra.

jazz pedagogies. Yet, most are eager to succeed; they simply do not know where or how to start. This paper aims to provide a starting point that includes some key topics and strategies to assist music educators in understanding some fundamental principles of jazz pedagogy. The objective is to provide a source to literature, resources, and repertoire considerations for further study.

Context

Jazz education has been a legitimised inclusion within the Australian tertiary and school systems since approximately the early 1980s (state and territory secondary curriculum inclusions slightly differ), largely based on the work of Don Burrows and Rex Hobcroft, who pioneered the development of the first jazz studies course in Australia, at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music from 1973 (Johnson as cited in Bisset & Johnson, 1987, pp. 190–192; Gould as cited in Bebbington, 1997, p. 306). Johnson (1987) noted, some 37 years ago, that by the end of 1986 there were at least 16 conservatoria, universities, colleges of advanced education, or similar government-funded tertiary institutions in which jazz studies could be taken as part or all of a diploma program in Australia (as cited in Bisset & Johnson, 1987, p. 192). The percolation into secondary school systems was a natural next step and jazz studies and ensembles expanded rapidly throughout the 1980s, with most secondary schools having at least one jazz ensemble as part of their extra-curricular music program.

The inauguration of the Jazz Educators' Association in NSW in 1987 was one example of this increase. Whilst now almost every tertiary institution in Australia offers some form of jazz studies program, or strand, the primary focus is often on performance studies rather than education and pedagogy. Anecdotal research indicates that while the increase in jazz studies education in Australia has grown rampantly since the late 1980s, specialist pre-service music teacher training in jazz pedagogies significantly lacks among university initial teacher music education program offerings. The Sydney Conservatorium of Music has made some progress with the inclusion of the course 'Teaching Jazz in Secondary School' (The University of Sydney, 2023); similarly, Edith Cowan University includes jazz repertoire within their course 'Contemporary Music Teaching Practices' (Edith Cowan University, 2023), yet a deficiency remains.

One of the complexities of jazz education is the historic nature of how the art form was learnt: through live performance and recording. As David Baker points out, recordings were the first jazz textbooks (1989, p. iii). This has contributed in part to the difficulty of producing complete jazz pedagogical methods. Until recently, little has existed in the way of specific comprehensive texts or method books for music educators in how to develop, teach, and organise their jazz programs. A further difficulty is that jazz pedagogy texts, by classification, are often disguised under different titles, particularly those more specific to one area of jazz, for example, jazz history, theory, or improvisation. David Baker's 1989 book, *Jazz Pedagogy: A Comprehensive Method of Jazz Education for Teacher and Student*, was one of the first comprehensive jazz teaching methods to assemble rehearsal techniques, lesson plans, practical solutions, and improvisation approaches for school and private teachers. More recently, Richard Dunscomb and Willie L. Hill Jr.'s (2002) *Jazz Pedagogy: The Jazz Educator's Handbook and Resource Guide*, is perhaps the most comprehensive current resource for jazz educators. As the field of jazz education is so expansive, the jazz educator is encouraged to thoroughly immerse themselves in the specific and general writing on the various aspects of jazz pedagogy (history, theory, and improvisation), to fully develop a broad understanding. A selection of some important texts that cover these topics include:

Jazz History: Gioia (2021) *The History of Jazz;* Gottlieb (1997) *Reading Jazz: A Gathering of Autobiography, Reportage, and Criticism from 1919 to*

now; Gridley (2009) *Jazz Styles: History and Analysis*; Tanner, Megill, and Gerow (2001) *Jazz*; and Walser (1999) *Keeping Time: Readings in Jazz History.*

Jazz Theory: Lawn and Hellmer (1996) *Jazz: Theory and Practice;* Levine (1995) *The Jazz Theory Book*; Mulholland and Hojnacki (2012) *The Berklee Book of Jazz Harmony*; Rawlins, Bahha, and Tagliarino (2005) *Jazzology: The Encyclopedia of Jazz Theory for all Musicians;* and Terefenko (2018) *Jazz Theory: From Basic to Advanced Study.*

Improvisation: Berg (1998) *Jazz Improvisation: The Goal Note Method*; Berliner (1994) *Thinking in Jazz: The Infinite Art of Improvisation;* and Riposo (1989) *Jazz Improvisation: A Whole-Brain Approach.*

Consultation with these texts, and others, will broaden the music educator's knowledge into understanding more specific topics within jazz pedagogy. Based on this literature, a contextualisation presented in the following sections provides some practical, succinct suggestions around rehearsal techniques, instrument and director roles and responsibilities, rehearsal, and performance set-up, directed student listening, jazz style, language and articulation, improvisation, and repertoire.

Rehearsal techniques – the foundation

Instrumentation

The instrumentation of a standard jazz ensemble is: five saxophones, four trumpets, four trombones, piano, guitar, bass, drums, and optional auxiliary percussion. Increasingly, more publishers are now including additional flexi parts such as flute, clarinet, French horn, and baritone/euphonium to allow for added flexibility within instrumental music programs, especially those which are unable to fulfil the full ensemble instrumentation. As Dunscomb and Hill (2002) noted, one of the key advantages of a 17–20-piece jazz ensemble is that it provides students with a challenge, as each player is one-to-a-part. This responsibility stimulates students to know that if they do not play their part, it affects the success of the entire ensemble (Dunscomb & Hill, 2002, p. 129). Jazz ensembles, therefore, allow for a greater sense of students' musical development in confidence and teamwork (Dunscomb & Hill, 2002, p. 129). Hence, the preliminary success of the jazz ensemble is based on students' understanding of instrumentation and the specific roles and responsibilities of each instrument's contribution to the ensemble. Directors need to ensure that students have a clear understanding of their instrument's role, section part within the group, as well as that of the other players. The following section provides a concise summary of these points.

The saxophone section

The first alto is the strongest and most confident player within the section. Their mission is to lead and direct the section in stylistic concepts, such as pitch, articulation, phrasing, and section blend. The first alto is also responsible for establishing a connection to the trumpet and trombone sections (especially first players) and to the rhythm section. The second alto supports the first alto, and in some cases replaces the first alto in certain sections or passages of repertoire. The second alto must focus on intonation and follow the lead of the first alto player. The first tenor, like the first alto, must be a confident player, as they will be provided with many opportunities as a soloist, and in leading soli sections.

The first tenor must focus on blending their sound to that of the first alto and not overpower the section. The second tenor supports the lower harmonic function of the section together with the baritone. Confidence in this part is also necessary, as the second tenor often doubles the first alto and repertoire often includes counter melodies and disjunct melodic lines, especially in higher level repertoire (Grade 3 and above). The baritone is the fifth and bass voice within the section. The baritone can often be challenging as the part is adaptive and variable. The baritone often plays tonic chordal notes and adds tone colours to the section. The

companion is the fourth or bass trombone part.

A concept that may seem obvious but requires important focus in the saxophone section is balance and tone. The saxophone section in many ways is less powerful compared to the brass sections. As a result, attention needs to be paid to supporting the sound. Vadala (as cited in Dunscomb & Hill, 2002), describes this as "*play through*, not just *into* the saxophone" (p. 236; emphasis in original). Attention to developing a clear and distinct "saxophone section tone," that includes a balance of all highs (upper partials) and lows (deeper partials), is essential. Each individual part and voice must be distinguishable yet must blend to create a 'sweet' section sound. Some specific strategies regarding balance and blend are discussed in the rehearsal/performance set-up section below.

The trumpet section

The first trumpet is the leader of the trumpet section and, like the first alto, is required to be a strong and confident player with a secure upper register. The position also carries several other responsibilities such as leadership of the trumpet section, but also of the ensemble as a whole. The first trumpet will play the melody and uphold the melodic intent of the piece. The player is often required to interpret the stylistic and genre nuances of the piece and therefore needs to be technically proficient and attentive to various jazz styles to prepare for such demands. Endurance and sound projection are also keys to this role. The first trumpet player needs to work closely with the first alto and first trombone to ensure cohesiveness across the ensemble. It is also important for the first trumpet to work closely with the drummer for style, time, feel, dynamics, and overall ensemble sound. It is important to consider that the first trumpet player's ability to play high should always be secondary to playing with musicality and phrasing stylistically and appropriately.

The second trumpet's key role is to support the first trumpet player. A fine balance between the first and second trumpet must be achieved. Thus, the second player's ability is dependent upon following, listening, and allowing the first player to relax and lead the section. The second trumpet is therefore key in the intonation of the section and in ensuring that the articulation, phrasing, and sound match that of the first player. Like the first tenor, the second trumpet will be provided with many opportunities for solos and should be confident in this area. The third trumpet player's responsibility is to ensure dynamic contrast and balance within the section. They work closely with the fourth trumpet part to ensure a solid foundation for the first and second parts to rest upon. The third part often complements the first part with melodic lines written in the middle register. The fourth trumpet, like the third, is responsible for linking the tone, dynamics, and intonation of the trumpet section together. The fourth player is also responsible for connecting the trumpet and trombone sections together as a brass section. In more experienced bands, the fourth player is the strongest role in the section. Montgomery and Olstad (as cited in Dunscomb & Hill, 2002, p. 251) noted that the fourth player determines how successful the dynamic variation within the section will be, as well as determining dynamic level at any point in the chart. The first player must therefore count on the fourth player to listen to the first player's stylistic and dynamic variation and direction to then take charge of that music event to ensure that it is played correctly (p. 251). In higher level repertoire, the fourth trumpet is often provided with solo opportunities.

The trombone section

The first trombone is the section leader. The first trombone, like the first trumpet, will require a secure upper register. The first trombone will need to match the first trumpet and first alto in phrasing, articulation, and style. Opportunities for solos often appear in the first trombone part, especially in ballads. The second trombone is required to ensure a blend within the section and links the

other voicings together. The second player will need to listen carefully to the third and fourth trumpets, as well as the first and the second tenor saxophones to do this. Like the second trumpet and second tenor, the second trombone will be provided with many opportunities for solos and should be confident in this area.

The third trombone is required to have a strong and confident sound, especially in the lower register. The player's key role is in securing the intonation of the section. The third trombone often doubles the fourth trumpet and second tenor saxophone parts. In some arrangements with only three trombone parts, the third part becomes the bass part. The fourth trombone or bass trombone, like the baritone saxophone, often has similar tonic chordal notes roles and adds tone colour to the section. Because of this, like the third trombone, the fourth must have a secure intonation and sufficient projection to secure the balance within the section. As Kaplan (as cited in Dunscomb & Hill, 2002, p. 265) noted, the bass trombone is a specialist area and students should be directed to specialist bass trombone instruction, equipment, and method books to enhance their ability to fulfil this role.

The rhythm section

The rhythm section comprises the piano, guitar, bass, and drums. This section is, for many directors, the least understood, yet in many respects it is the most important section of the jazz ensemble.

Piano

The role of the pianist in the rhythm section is varied; however, in the most part, the role is to establish a chordal time feel and rhythmic groove. In lower level repertoire (for example, Grade 1 – 2.5), much of the piano right- and left-hand parts will be notated. In higher level repertoire, the pianist will be required to 'comp'[2] over the chord progression, especially in solo sections. Specialist jazz instruction should be sought to assist piano students with the specifics of the technical skills required in a jazz context. This includes how to approach chord voicing and interpretation of chord symbols and jazz nomenclature.

The complexities in the roles of the pianist (and guitarist), especially in their approach to chordal voicing in the young jazz ensemble, often require explicit direction in application from the director. For example, root-position chords in closed voicings (within one octave) are generally not suitable for jazz ensemble charts, even if written as such (Tolson & Orta as cited in Dunscomb & Hill, 2002, p. 190; Rebagliati as cited in Lillos, 2006, pp. 260–269). The piano player is therefore required to determine what notes to play based on the given chord symbols. For both the pianist and guitarist, an understanding of each other's role and how they will be working together, especially in chordal accompaniment, is essential. As a first general approach, encourage the pianist to use open chordal voicings, spread outside one octave. This results in clarity of sound and cleaner balance within the rhythm section.

Guitar

The guitar, like the piano, plays a harmonic and rhythmic role within the rhythm section. Just like the pianist, the guitarist must become familiar with the system of chord and notation symbols encountered in jazz. For many guitarists, this will include the addition of upper chordal extensions such as 9^{th}, 11^{th}, or 13^{th}. The guitarist is also required to develop an understanding of how the various symbols are interpreted in assorted styles and genres. The guitar is often only provided with slash marks and chord symbols regardless of style or tempo. This allows the player freedom of strumming patterns and chords; however, this can also be confusing for the younger player (Rebagliati as cited in Lillos, 2006, pp. 279–282). In the first instance, guitarists should be directed to the 'Freddie Green' guitar style (Blair as cited in Dunscomb & Hill, 2002, pp. 228–229; Rebagliati as cited in Lillos, 2006, pp. 279–282).

2 In a jazz context, chordal accompaniment on piano is called 'comping' which is applying rhythmic style to the chord changes to complement the other musicians playing melodically.

Green's voicings, consisting of three notes (tonic, third, and seventh) in the upper register, serve as a basic departure point from the pianist in the harmonic structure of the ensemble, as discussed in the previous section. The aim is to create a clean, uncluttered sound. The upper register also provides room for the pianist and bass in the lower octave range. Rhythmically, the guitarist should aim for a down strum approach on each of the four beats in a bar in a swing style. In general, the guitar sound should be acoustic and rhythmic in nature whilst still maintaining a chordal function.

Bass

The bass player must focus on a keen sense of time, feel, and groove, which is the rhythmic interpretation drawn from the style or genre. In general terms, the bass part is the most specifically written of the rhythm section parts, especially in lower level repertoire. Like the pianist and guitarist, the bass player must become familiar with the system of chord, notation symbols, and nomenclature (Orta as cited in Dunscomb & Hill, 2002, pp. 205–212; Rebagliati as cited in Lillos, 2006, p. 267). In more advanced level repertoire, bass players are required to create bass lines from chord symbols.

The bass player will work closely with the drummer to ensure the pulse of the band is clear and consistent. The bass player should aim to create a smooth feel and work closely with the drummer's ride cymbal to achieve this. The bass player and drummer working together will ensure a solid foundation for the rhythm section and entire ensemble. Most importantly, the bass player also provides the harmonic foundation for the ensemble. In achieving this, the bass part must be clear and consistent in tempo, feel, and style at all times. The bass player will encounter walking bass lines and consideration must be given to ensuring notes are not too short and are played in a legato style for optimum feel and groove. Young bass players also tend to play exclusively in the first position (Rebagliati as cited in Lillos, 2006, p. 267); it is often overlooked that upper positions make many bass lines easier to play, especially in lower level repertoire that are in flat keys.

Drums

The drummer's role as the driving force or 'engine room' of the jazz ensemble cannot be underestimated. The drummer's primary role is to be a timekeeper, but it encompasses much more than time and tempo. A drummer is required to set the foundation for the feel and rhythmic groove, alongside the piano, guitar, and bass. The drummer primarily is responsible for controlling the dynamic level of the ensemble, and the style and mood of the band (Taveris as cited in Dunscomb & Hill, 2002, p. 213). The drummer can also act to control sectional clarity by use of cymbals, adding contrast that lends assorted colours to the sound of the band.

Important to consider, regardless of the complexity of the music played, is that the drummer should strive always for clarity. A strong focus on synchronisation of the ride cymbal to the bass part and consistent high-hat on beats 2 and 4 (in common time) will ensure success. Take care with younger drummers to ensure they do not overplay or overstress the off-beat between the snare and bass drum. Drummers must be able to create a variety of styles in jazz, such as swing, Latin (which includes samba, bossa nova, salsa, mambo), shuffle, funk, New Orleans Second-Line, and so on, at a variety of tempo. Beginner players often have tempo problems, owed to the number of demands made on their concentration (Rebagliati as cited in Lillos, 2006, p. 270). Therefore, drummers should be encouraged to practise with a metronome for developing consistent tempo as well as having a regular practice routine of stick and wrist control exercises (Rebagliati as cited in Lillos, 2006, p. 270).

The role of the director

In the jazz context, the term 'conductor' is rarely used as it does not describe the function of the person standing in front of the ensemble (Foote

as cited in Lillos, 2006, p. 228). Rather, the term 'director' is often used instead. For example, the primary difference between leading a concert band and leading a jazz ensemble is that the director *conducts* the former, but *directs* the latter (Hunsberger & Ernst, 1992, p. 151). Accordingly, in the jazz ensemble context, a baton is not used, and traditional conducting beat patterns and techniques are used sparingly, often only in ballads where there is more flexibility in tempo. However, some specific jazz directing techniques will assist the ensemble in performance. A brief list of the director responsibilities includes count-offs (including tempo setting). The count-off and use of vocal inflection is the director's starting point for conveying style, tempo, and dynamic levels. Further, musical interpretation, establishing a sense of groove, entrances, cues, cut-offs, dynamic variation, attacks, soloist order, and major divisions or changes in tempo or style, are all the primary responsibility of the director.

Conducting in beat patterns should be used sparingly and only in areas of rhythmic deviation such as in *colla voce*, rubato, ritardando, or major tempo, style, or meter changes. When required, conducting patterns or hand signals need only be demonstrated for as long as needed. The director's aim is to develop confidence and independence without the requirement to continually beat time in front of the ensemble (Dunscomb & Hill, 2002, p. 157). The director should feel free to move around the stage as necessary and not stand in one spot.

A significant role of the director is to ensure that the integrity of the music is achieved during performance. Often, many younger ensembles get caught up in the excitement of a performance, and in doing so, lose their sense of perspective regarding dynamic levels and contrast (Hunsberger & Ernst, 1992, p. 155). The director must be aware and conscious of such issues and be ready to direct as necessary to ensure the integrity of the music is maintained.

Rehearsal set-up versus performance set-up

Dunscomb and Hill (2002) stated, "Good performances come from good rehearsals; therefore, the better the rehearsal, the better the performance" (p. 151). The identification of the 'jazz sound' for each instrument and then the overall 'ensemble jazz sound' should be one of the objectives of the rehearsal process. Ensemble sound and style will be discussed in further detail below; however, understanding the basics of ensemble rehearsal and performance set-up is vital to the success of the jazz ensemble. Firstly, in the rehearsal setting, the director needs to teach the fundamentals of jazz sound, balance, tone, and unity within sections and across the ensemble. The most obvious difference in comparing the jazz ensemble to other large ensembles such as the concert band or string orchestra is that it is one person to a part. Musical independence and confidence are therefore key to success.

Stylistic considerations, articulations, section balance, and intonation are directed towards the leaders of each section. However, the standard performance set-up, as seen in Figure 1, is not always the most effective way to rehearse. There are several reasons for this. Firstly, the lead players, especially first trumpet, are forced to listen forward to the alto 1, tenor 1, and trombone 1. Secondly, teaching the 'jazz sound' through listening and visual observation should be of primary importance in junior and secondary school jazz ensemble contexts. Often, the standard performance set-up does not allow for all ensemble members to visually see, and be seen, or hear each other most effectively. A further challenge, as realised by Towner (2020) from the research of Karau and Williams (1993) in using the performance set-up in rehearsal, is 'social loafing'. In summary, "social loafing is the reduction in motivation and effort when individuals work collectively compared with when they work individually or coactively" (Karau & Williams, 1993, p. 681). Towner's adaptation of this to the jazz ensemble rehearsal context correlates to

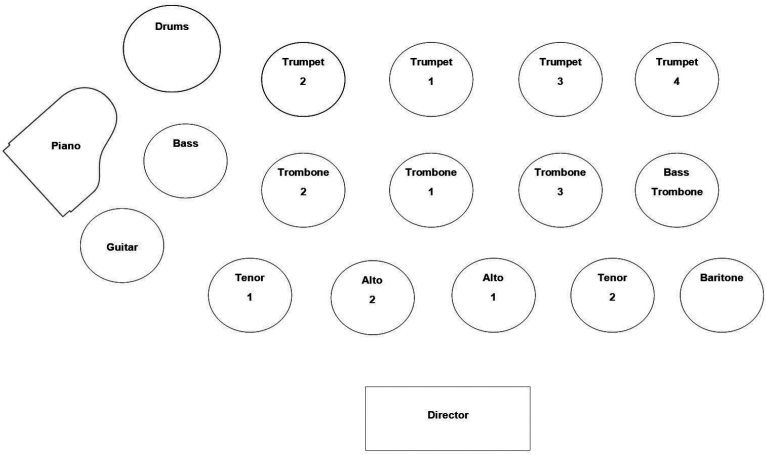

Figure 1: Standard jazz ensemble performance set-up.

musical terms, as students naturally put more effort into solo repertoire than into ensemble repertoire. This implies that as the ensemble increases in size, the degree of 'loafing' is more pronounced. Towner, therefore, advocates for a student-centred rehearsal environment that increases student engagement and reduces loafing.

A solution to this problem is to rehearse in the square or box rehearsal set-up, as illustrated in Figure 2. There are many advantages to rehearsing in the square set-up as this allows students to hear better and see one another, increasing musical independence (Dunscomb & Hill, 2002, p. 130). Based on Towner's (2020) research, the square rehearsal set-up also reduces the excuse to loaf. Students can see each other and hear their parts better, thus, enhancing balance and overall ensemble tone. Furthermore, it places the director

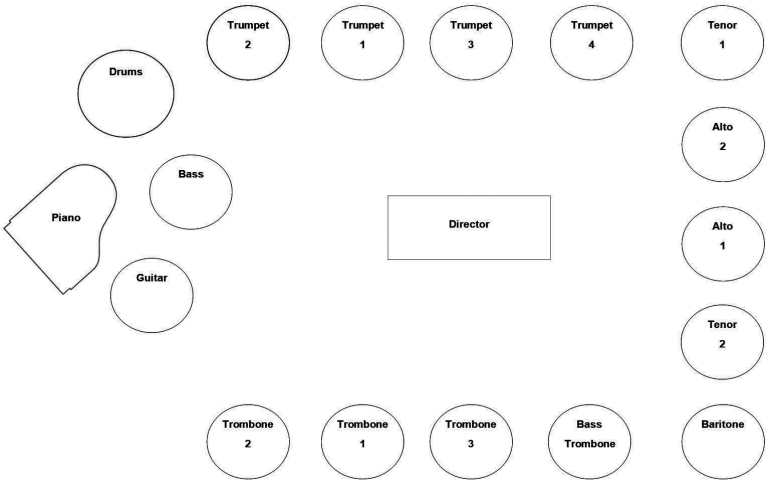

Figure 2: Jazz ensemble square/box rehearsal set-up.

in the middle of the ensemble. Likewise, the square rehearsal set-up can be used to facilitate student-centred learning via musical, visual, and verbal directives, as advocated by Towner. For example, a director can easily enable student-centred learning opportunities by running an 'open rehearsal' segment or even an entire rehearsal. Once students have mastered the repertoire, in the open rehearsal, they are responsible for directing the rehearsal through visual, physical, and aural cues, while the director takes a secondary role. The open rehearsals promote student autonomy, problem-solving skills, and musical independence.

It is important to remember that the square rehearsal set-up should not be used exclusively. Students must also be prepared for the performance. Thus, several rehearsals before a performance, the ensemble should also be rehearsed in the performance set-up (Figure 1). Students are then able to adjust to hearing and seeing the ensemble in the performance format. Where possible, the use of tiered risers for trumpets and trombones behind the saxophones will significantly improve sound projection, balance, and the players' ability to hear each other. If this is not a possibility, the use of higher stools for trombones and trumpets standing can be one solution.

Directed student listening

Listening to quality jazz ensemble and big band performances is essential to the success of any jazz program as well as for students developing an understanding of jazz style. Recordings should be used as a regular part of a director's pedagogical toolkit in rehearsals. The purpose is wide-ranging, but for students to learn the language of jazz they must listen to it (Dunscomb & Hill, 2002, pp. 154–155). Students should be directed towards listening to the overall ensemble sound, the sound of individual sections and instruments, the articulations, the phrasing and style, the balance, and the impact (Dunscomb & Hill, 2002, p. 155). The recordings used should be of quality, reputable bands that provide a model for students to aspire. Each rehearsal should include an element of directed student listening, whereby the director highlights to students what they are listening for, as identified, and how it applies to their context and repertoire. After the directed listening, student-led discussion, including leading questions from the director, should follow. This enables more meaningful explanation of jazz concepts that are then reinforced within the repertoire.

Most reputable publishers such as Alfred Music, Hal Leonard, Kjos, Brolga, and others, now provide high-quality demonstration recordings of their pieces. These recordings are also useful in assisting students in specific characteristics of a particular arrangement. Where possible, specific repertoire listening should include a combination of both the publisher's demonstration and professional jazz ensemble recordings. This principle can be further reinforced by creating and sharing Spotify, Apple, YouTube, or other media platform playlists for students to listen to outside of rehearsals. Recommended listening lists that are ensemble or instrument specific promote students' understanding of jazz nuance and language.

Jazz style, language, and articulation

The importance of explicit instruction of 'jazz style', more commonly called 'jazz language', is reinforced by Baker (1989, pp. 129–146), Dunscomb and Hill (2002, pp. 62–76), Hunsberger and Ernst (1992, p. 153), and Kohut (1973, pp. 161–162). As discussed in the previous section, listening to recordings and, if possible, attending live jazz performances, are essential ingredients and underpin a complete understanding of jazz stylistics. The origins of jazz as an aural tradition are underpinned by instrumentalists replicating vocal sounds and embellishments on their instruments. A key consideration for the director is an awareness of the specifics of jazz nuance; this includes specifics in jazz style, language, and articulation.

For example, often jazz rhythms are not played as notated. Therefore, the director must understand the interpretation of the rhythmic notation in the repertoire and apply this understanding conceptually in the rehearsal.

The most fundamental of these skills is the concept of 'swing', which centres around quaver and dotted-quaver rhythms being played with a triplet subdivision and 12/8 time feeling, as illustrated in Figure 3. The use of jazz articulation syllables (sometimes referred to as 'scat' syllables) offers a useful tool for directors and students to develop jazz feel, language, and style. Jazz syllables are phonetic sounds used to imitate those made by wind players in the jazz idiom (Dunscomb & Hill, 2002, p. 64). In jazz, many different syllables can be used to imitate the approximate feel of the style. The 'dah' syllable is commonly used in jazz rather than the traditional 'tah' in classical contexts. The latter is used to produce a sustained (or full note), often accented. Other syllables include 'dot' used on quaver and semiquaver notes, 'doo' or 'da' used on connected quaver notes (e.g., 'doo' on the downbeat, 'da' on the off-beat), and 'dhat' used as a detached accent. There are other variants, such as 'dit' and 'bah', which are also commonly used.

Essential Elements for Jazz Ensemble by Mike Steinel (2002) and *Standard of Excellence Jazz Ensemble Method* by Dean Sorenson and Bruce Pearson (1997) provide good teaching methods for younger ensembles to develop an understanding of jazz articulation. In both methods, the basics of jazz style and articulation are introduced and explored through various 'traditional' versus 'jazz' exercises. In addition, *Essential Elements for Jazz Ensemble* (Steinel, 2002), Dunscomb and Hill (2002, p. 70), and Hunsberger (1992, p. 154) offer glossaries and explanations for more advanced jazz articulation, ornamentation, and expression.

Experienced jazz musicians intuitively apply these basics of jazz language and articulation to context, albeit through extensive playing experience, underpinned by considerable time devoted to listening, analysing, transcribing, and imitating jazz recordings. For this reason, directed student listening, coupled to jazz articulation exercises in rehearsals, are essential combinations for students to develop jazz vocabulary (Dunscomb & Hill, 2002, pp. 22–32). Particularly in the younger jazz ensemble, a portion of the rehearsal should include time devoted to jazz vocabulary development. Articulation exercises from method books such as those mentioned, and others, provide sequential instruction of simple to more complex jazz vocabulary. Once students have grasped the basics, additional rehearsal exercises can include students singing their individual parts using jazz syllable language, call and response exercises (especially for harder or complex phrasing/rhythms) or sing then play exercises applied to repertoire excerpts.

Improvisation

Pedagogical approaches to teaching jazz improvisation are diverse and varied. A comprehensive investigation of each approach is outside the scope of this paper. However, some key principles drawn from these methods, such as Berg (1998), Kratus (1995, pp. 27–38), Baker (1989, pp. 167–177), Dunscomb and Hill (2002, pp. 95–118), and Lillos (2006), are presented here succinctly to provide a starting point.

Teaching jazz improvisation is as much about teaching creativity as it is about teaching jazz vocabulary and jazz grammar (Lillos, 2006, p.

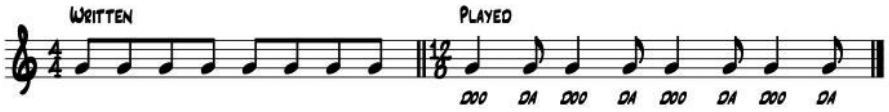

Figure 3: Swing Interpretation.

56). Prior development of jazz vocabulary and language, as discussed in the previous sections of this paper, provides a solid foundation for improvisation success. Directed and active student listening to jazz, transcribing solos, and emulation are essential skills for students to develop in forming a jazz improvisation vocabulary. As Dunscomb and Hill (2002, p. 95) acknowledged, "by developing acute jazz aural skills, students will be able to internalise the jazz language".

Jazz improvisation allows students alternative ways to listen, communicate, and express themselves (Allen as cited in Lillos, 2006, p. 59). In rehearsals, it is first important to establish a culture of safety and respect. As Allen (as cited in Lillos, 2006, p. 59) stated, the building of a 'community' where students feel respect (from peers and teachers), are comfortable with their role in the ensemble, and are challenged, but not overwhelmed, is essential. When such an environment is established, students often feel more comfortable to take improvisation risks and embrace new ideas. In practical terms, the mastery of scales and an understanding of harmony are also important aspects that underpin jazz improvisation. In younger ensembles, the blues scale is often the logical starting point; however, it can become very monosyllabic quickly. Therefore, introduce other variations such as major and minor scales, and other pentatonic scales and modes as students become more comfortable.

Improvisation can be established as part of a regular warm-up routine; have the rhythm section play a simple 12-bar blues and introduce imitation in the form of call and response (listen and replicate). Start first by the director leading examples, and then later students can do so. Begin with introducing simple two-, then four-, then eight-bar phrases. There are other variations such as rhythm (see Dean in Lillos, 2006, pp. 66–70) and melody (see Tynan in Lillos, 2006, pp. 71–73; Quinlan in Lillos, 2006, pp. 92–96). Initially, the rhythmic and melodic ideas should be sung or played by the director with students replicating via singing then playing on instruments, or a combination of both. It is recommended to start by using a small number of notes such as the triad, or the first five notes of a major scale. In a 12-bar blues, move the same pattern to the fourth and fifth chords of the progression, and ensure emphasis on articulation.

These approaches are good, accessible ways to introduce the basics of jazz vocabulary through improvisation in the jazz ensemble setting. It is impracticable in rehearsal to allow all 16 players a whole chorus; therefore, to allow every student an opportunity, trading fours is an effective way to move quickly around the ensemble. Jazz improvisation can be an exciting and rewarding aspect of learning about one of the fundamental jazz principles. Approached with learner success in mind, and when attention and continual reinforcement is afforded to respect, comfort, and challenge, learner success will follow.

Repertoire

One of the most important roles of the jazz ensemble director is the selection of repertoire. Repertoire needs to reflect the strengths of the band; for example, range of instruments, ability level of students, soloist skills, and so on. Considering these points, rather than 'what' you or your students want to play, is critical. A full program of music that is too difficult for the band can harm students' morale (Dunscomb & Hill, 2002, p. 162; Lillos, 2006, p. 243). Too much time spent on learning notes results in less time on developing musicality and jazz nuances within pieces. Consideration of repertoire that expands educational perspectives rather than just for performance requires considered thought and planning. Repertoire should always be treated with an educational outcome in mind and selecting quality, well-written repertoire is of highest importance.

In selecting a program of repertoire for a semester or year, aim to select a range of genres and styles (swing, rock, blues, Latin, ballads).

This repertoire should be varied enough that it enables teaching of a range of concepts and skills. A portion of classic jazz standards from a range of periods (see Dunscomb & Hill, 2002, pp. 167–181, for jazz classic standards at various levels) will enrich the knowledge and skills of students. It is also important to consider a balance between popular and more traditional repertoire. A selection of popular repertoire to maintain student engagement is important, but in doing so, ensure that the pieces are well written and include some educational benefit. Resources such as Caniato's (2009) *The Jazz Ensemble Companion* can be a useful resource in providing detailed information on instrumentation, ranges, playability, and requirements for rendering the score.

It is also my strong conviction that students should be exposed to well-crafted music from their own country. In the case of Australia, one example is Brolga Music which produces quality pieces from Australian jazz musicians and composers. Commissioning works by Australian jazz composers is another way to set your band apart and allows for great creativity.

Further support and professional development

There are several international associations for jazz education that can provide further assistance to music educators, such as the Jazz Education Network and Essentially Ellington delivered through Jazz at Lincoln Center, which offer useful resources in professional development. Both organisations also provide access to repertoire, resources, videos, and professional development and events.

Summary

In summary, this paper has attempted to synthesise some of the literature and key concepts related to understanding the basic principles of jazz ensemble pedagogy. The fundamentals of understanding jazz instrumentation, rehearsal and performance set-ups, rehearsal techniques, directed student listening, jazz style, language and articulation, improvisation, and repertoire are necessary skills for the instrumental music teacher to develop to ensure success of their jazz program. A further investigation of the literature identified throughout this paper will provide a more comprehensive perspective on the topics discussed. The author's hope is that this paper has provided a succinct introduction to jazz ensemble direction for the novice or the early-career instrumental music teacher. It is further hoped that the adoption of the principles outlined herein will assist in formalising an authentic model for jazz education in junior and secondary schools in Australia. A shift in jazz ensemble instruction from being an ad hoc approach within instrumental music programs starts with formalising and upskilling of teachers in jazz pedagogical knowledge to develop high quality and authentic jazz teaching practices. This results in better jazz ensemble programs in schools and more accurate outcomes for students in these ensembles.

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