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President's Message Kelly Weber

To start, I congratulate you all for making it through the year 2021. If you are as nostalgic as I am, you will look back on the growth you have made as a human and an educator. I have always enjoyed the perspective of a “fresh start” this time of year, and linked to that is the hunger to sharpen my teaching skills.

I am excited about the contributions this newsletter will make to my classroom, and possibly yours. Check out a healthy perspective of what judges really want to hear at festivals, submitted by Mike Conrad; Thoughts on how to authentically incorporate latin jazz into our ensemble, by Jim Dreier; a step by step process on how to really choose the best lit for your group from Kelli Swehla; and a new exciting resource for literature itself with IJazzMusic . May 2022 be your best year yet.



How to Select Better Music for Your Jazz Band

By Kelli Swehla

Memes tend to do a good job of summing up something in a funny way. I offer you exhibit A:



If you're like me, you laughed at this. Then you realized something: we all do this or have done it. If you're a little bit older (also like me), these years are hopefully mostly behind you. If you're not a little bit older (welcome to the profession), you may be falling victim to the "why don't my bands sound good," mentality. I'm here to tell you, your bands might not be reaching their potential because you don't spend enough time thinking through literature in the way that helps you and your students be successful.

Now, rest-assured, most of us are never completely successful at this endeavor. Sometimes and during some years, things just go more according to plan than others. The evolution of a band director and more specifically, a jazz band director, is a long arc.

Here are some common mistakes when choosing literature and following, some practical ideas to address them. (Disclaimer: this list is not exhaustive and neither are the solutions.)

Common mistakes include choosing music...

- That's too difficult or a group of charts that are, in general, too demanding for your group
- That features a student on a piece who isn't equipped for that yet
- Too quickly because your first rehearsal is coming up
- From your library for no other reason than that it's in your library
- That emphasizes students or sections that aren't your strongest
- Without understanding the improvisation requirements and if they'd work for your students
- With rhythm section parts that are beyond your students' capabilities
- That boxes yourself into the idea that you must perform a ballad or any other genre of chart
- That ignores historical contexts, both in selection and in preparation
- That doesn't complement the rest of the repertoire you've selected or will select
- Or a chart that's too difficult and refusing to take it out of the mix when it just isn't working, or, making this determination too late before an upcoming performance
- Without listening to and evaluating enough literature to make the best selections for your group
- Without asking for advice, especially if you are not a "jazzier"

Solutions

Get to know your group

Take an inventory of who's in your group and what they can do. Very carefully estimate what they might be able to do individually and collectively with a little practice. Things you must know before selection of charts include:

- What are the ranges of your brass players?
- Can your piano and/or guitar players read chords/comp?
 - Do you know what comping means?
 - Are you comfortable teaching students how to comp if they don't know?
- Does your bass player feel comfortable composing a walking bass line, or does the bass part need to be completely written out?
 - Do you feel comfortable writing the walking bass line or teaching the student how to do it if the publisher does not provide it?
- Is the drum part that is written on the music useful to the student or not? (Many older composers/arrangers expected drummers to just listen to the band and figure it out; that's why you see very basic drum parts.) If not, are you able to write one out?
- What are the styles that they have performed well in the past? Ones that they haven't attempted or haven't done well?
- Which student is ready to be featured on a tune, if any?
- What is the comfort level your students have with improvising and to what degree can your more developed improvisers perform?
- What are the improvisation requirements of the charts you're interested in and are they accessible to most of the students who might take a solo?

Listening to charts

For most of us as teachers, we can choose a decent concert band piece in the course of an hour of listening and searching. Jazz is different, however. Under the umbrella of jazz there are many different styles of music and many unique considerations since it is a chamber ensemble with improvisation as a requirement. Your goals in selection are different and generally take longer to accomplish, especially if you don't have a list of charts/arrangers/composers that you know very well. This task of listening to a wide variety of charts is especially important if you don't have a strong background in jazz.

Here are some examples of goals in understanding your selection that are unique in a jazz band setting:

- Lead trumpet leadership abilities (sound, rhythm, articulation, pitch) and range
- Lead trombone leadership abilities (sound, rhythm, articulation, pitch) and range
- Lead alto sax leadership abilities
- The improvisational abilities of each student
- The ability of all students to "carry their weight" in the chamber ensemble
- Rhythm section responsibilities to written parts versus non-written parts (written out/expected vs. implied)

As jazz band teachers, we have to listen for the sake of listening (so do your students, by the way). Get to know the different styles and all of the people who have written in them and will write for them. Start making a list that may include things that work now or could work later. That may include charts that would work for your group when you have a great alto soloist or ones that work to emphasize your current strengths. Getting to know more charts will help you narrow down charts for your group when that time comes around. The more you listen (think: summer project) the easier life will be in jazz band in the long run.

To Continue Reading the Article, Visit the JEI Resources Blog at
<https://jeiresources.wordpress.com/2022/01/11/how-to-select-better-music-for-your-jazz-band/>



Let's Dance!

Accepting the Latin jazz invitation with Engagement and Discovery

Atychiphobia: Fear of making mistakes, Atychimusicaphobia: Fear of making mistakes playing (or directing) Latin jazz

OK, the second one was made up. But according to carefully done and totally anecdotal research, this is a real thing. The fear of rehearsing a Latin jazz chart with your jazz band only to be “trashed” by the ever-watchful adjudicator, keeps many directors from engaging in it. Or perhaps the fear of the unknown, and wondering “where to start?” keeps that mambo off the music stands. The end result is the same - students, directors, and audience members are denied one of the most beneficial, culturally rich, and popular jazz styles. This article intends to provide some context around the problem, share a bit of personal history, and include some helpful resources. Most of all, we want to encourage and support jazz band directors to come out of the shadows and accept the Latin jazz invitation to dance.

Dreier's Perspective:

The more time I spend with public school band directors, the more respect and admiration I have for them. Like any field, there are as many types and levels of competency as there are people. Motivations can run the gamut of “we must win contests,” to “we must have fun and learn.” I admire any teacher who gets up at 6:00 a.m. to be at a 7:00 a.m. jazz band rehearsal before a long day of school. If they are trying hard to do their best, I admire them even more. So, before I go any further, thank you to all of you out there in the trenches doing your best. You make a real difference.

Readers of this article may know me. I have followed the muse of Latin music, drumming and jazz for many years here in Iowa. I have traveled to Brazil, Cuba and around the US to study and try to figure it all out. I have sat next to some of the greatest Latin drummers in the world, and in the process, often made a complete fool of myself. And let's not stop there.

When our young family moved back to Iowa from Boston in 1986, I found myself in Orquesta Alto Maiz (Iowa's “Salsa Band”). It was formed by then UNI jazz director Dr. Bob Washut and Panama-born music educator Ed East. We produced 8 CDs, traveled abroad, and enjoyed strong popularity. But when we started, most of us were inexperienced. Mistakes were made (Ed was patient). There are tracks on our CDs that I wish I could fix. But there they are, for all eternity.

I relate this because making mistakes is how we eventually became a damn good Latin jazz/salsa band. Of course, the right attitude is important. Try it, put it out there...you may stumble, but you learn from your mistakes, find the answers, and make the unknown less intimidating (see resources list below). When you engage jazz of any kind, you engage a rich cultural history that resonates when you play it with authenticity. If you approach it with the respect and care it deserves, mistakes are simply opportunities for success.

So this is my message to all those who dread the reckoning of a judicator and feel intimidated by the vast, sometimes mysterious world of Latin jazz. It is better to step on your partner's foot a few times, than to never get to the dance at all. Engage, reach out, be brave, get the information, and let Latin jazz be the inspirational partner it can truly be.

To read the rest of the article, visit the JEL resources blog at

<https://jeiresources.wordpress.com/2022/01/10/lets-dance-accepting-the-latin-jazz-invitation-with-engagement-and-discovery/>

What Judges *Really* Want to Hear at Jazz Festivals/Competitions

By Mike Conrad, University of Northern Iowa

Although I have only been adjudicating at jazz festivals in Iowa for the past six or seven years at this point, I have noticed that there often seems to be a disconnect between what directors think judges want to hear and what they actually want to hear. I interviewed a handful of adjudicators in Iowa who have way more experience than I do, and there was quite a bit of overlap in terms of what we all agreed was important in a jazz festival performance.

Literature

The importance of choosing high quality literature that is appropriate for your group cannot be overstated. There have been a number of good articles written on this topic, including an entire JEI Newsletter devoted to repertoire back in November of 2013 (Newsletter No. 10).

Quality

When I am judging or clinicing at a festival, I want to hear good music! There is so much amazing music that fits under the broad umbrella of jazz. Our students deserve to be exposed to the best parts of this rich tradition, and our audience (including the adjudication panel) deserves a performance filled with beauty and variety.

Appropriate for Your Band

One of the adjudicators I interviewed for this article said he'd almost rather hear lower-quality music played well, as opposed to high-quality music that the band just can't perform convincingly. My thought is: can't we have both high-quality music and ensemble-appropriate music? There is enough great jazz music out there that will work for the unique strengths and weaknesses of your band; it will simply take a lot of time and effort to find it. To reiterate a point Steve Shanley made in his article "Literature Selection is Our Curriculum," "your programming decisions are worthy of a serious time investment." Set aside time to listen to recordings and check out scores, keep detailed notes on what's out there, and reach out to your local jazz repertoire experts (Kyle Engelhardt, Chris Strohmaier, and Christopher Merz are a few who come to mind).

Variety

Most directors seem to understand the need for variety in their set. A point that came up multiple times in my interviews was that there are other ways to achieve variety beyond the "formula" of swing opener, ballad feature in the middle, and Latin closer. Christopher Merz explained to me that he always appreciates directors who break this mold, who avoid the low-hanging fruit (publisher "best-sellers"), and think of their repertoire selections as an artistic statement. I agree! I am always delighted to hear something new and interesting that I have never heard before alongside some classic swingers and deeper cuts by writers like Benny Carter, Mary Lou Williams, and Duke Ellington.

Stick to Three

I asked each adjudicator that I talked to for their opinion on programming three tunes vs. four in a 20-minute festival set. Everyone generally favored three. I've often heard Bob Washut say that we should "leave them wanting more." Another interviewee explained, "if you can't say what you need to say in three charts, that fourth chart is not going to help." Perhaps it's one of those things that has developed into a norm over the years at Iowa jazz festivals to the point where bands playing at a certain level feel the need to program four charts. As an adjudicator, I don't want to hear it! In fact, it will sour my opinion of a band's performance if that fourth tune is not well-prepared or if that fourth tune duplicates a style and tempo that was already represented in the set. If the best way to showcase the unique and diverse strengths of your band while performing a variety of great music is to program four selections, then so be it; but generally speaking, I recommend trying to say it in three.

Swing

Of course, programming music that swings is essential. For a high school director with the right priorities, over 50% of the music played by their jazz band in a given year will be swing. It should go without saying that at a jazz festival, jazz music should be performed! This brings me to the topic of authenticity.

Authenticity

As jazz adjudicators, we are most interested in the elements that are unique to jazz music. While intonation, balance/blend, dynamics, etc. are all important, these elements of basic musicianship and ensemble performance are also kind of expected. We will of course address when the band is not in tune or when one section is way too quiet (I'm looking at you, saxophones!), but our focus is usually on 1.) characteristic jazz articulation (swing articulation in particular); 2.) creative improvisation that fits the tune rhythmically, stylistically, and harmonically; and 3.) the rhythm section!

Articulation

Some common issues:

- Over-tonguing — Use the minimum amount of tongue needed to get the articulation to come across, particularly on 8th note figures.
- Over-swinging — The faster the tempo, the more even the 8th notes should be. Keep it light!
- Choppiness — This goes hand-in-hand with the first two. 8th note lines should be legato until the last note. Blow through repeated notes.
- Phrases that lack shape — In swing, the first note, the highest note, and the last note of a phrase should usually be accented. The articulation is entirely dependent on the contour of the line.

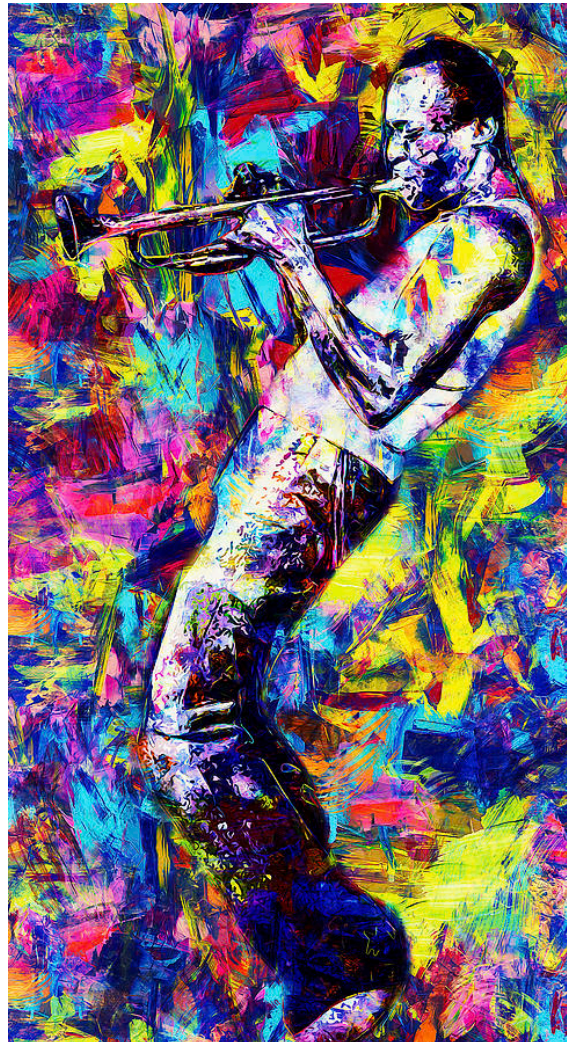
Listening

While the general guidelines above will help get a band "in the ballpark" in terms of authentic articulation, there is no way to really make it happen without going to the source — the recordings! Rather than operating with some Iowa jazz festival version of what we think the "rules" of jazz are, we should study what actual jazz musicians do, and strive to capture the stylistic nuances that make that music sound the way it does.

Here's the problem: most high school students will not listen to jazz, or won't listen to it often enough and with the depth and attention to detail that is required to sound like they are really speaking the jazz language. The ones who do fall in love with the music, who listen to it obsessively and practice like crazy, will sound great, but the reality is that most of the students in your jazz ensemble are not there. That is why the director needs to be the gatekeeper for jazz style and authenticity. Your students might not listen to enough jazz, but YOU should. In order to give an authentic-sounding jazz performance, the band must know what the music should sound like (imagine being asked to paint a detailed picture of a creature you have never seen before); this begins with the director knowing what the music should sound like and helping the band know what to listen for.

Make sure to take rehearsal time to listen to recordings together as an ensemble. This is not to relinquish you from the responsibility of strongly encouraging your students to listen to jazz on their own time. Paul McKee's Recommended Jazz Recordings list (available on the JEI website) is an excellent starting place.

To read the rest of the article, visit the JEI resources blog at <https://jeiresources.wordpress.com/2022/01/10/what-judges-really-want-to-hear-at-jazz-festivals-competitions/>



*Meet the 2022 All State Jazz Directors...***1A/2A Rick Stone**

Rick Stone holds a bachelor's degree in music education from the University of Northern Iowa (Cedar Falls, IA) and a Master's in Jazz Performance from the New England Conservatory of Music (Boston, MA). He has studied with Robert Washut and Chris Merz (UNI), Jerry Bergonzi, George Garzone, Bob Brookmeyer, Marty Ehrlich, and Steve Lacy (NEC).

Rick has performed and recorded with the Either/Orchestra, Jazz Composers' Alliance Orchestra, Ayn Inserto Jazz Orchestra, the Quartet of Happiness, Mehmet Ali Sanlikol's "What's next," David Liebman, Bob Brookmeyer, George Garzone, John Tchicai, John Fedchock, Sean Jones, and others.

Mr. Stone taught jazz ear training and saxophone at the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston, as well as jazz ear training, saxophone, and small ensembles at New England Conservatory Preparatory School/School of Continuing Ed.

Rick teaches 4th-8th grade instrumental music and digital music production in Brookline Public Schools, and he maintains an active performance schedule throughout New England.



3A- Jennifer Wharton

Jennifer Wharton is a low brass specialist based in New York City. Though getting her start classically, Jen has deep roots in jazz, commercial, chamber and Broadway music. Jennifer leads the trombone-forward ensemble, Bonegasm, commissioning works from jazz heavyweights and newcomers. She was awarded a 2020 grant by the NYC Women's Fund for Media, Music and Theater to continue to bring trombone music to the masses. The result was Bonegasm's sophomore album, *Not A Novelty* (2021), a follow up to their debut *Bonegasm* (2019). *Downbeat Magazine* called the most recent album "Trombone Ecstasy".

Jen has held positions on Broadway at *West Side Story*, *King Kong*, *Beautiful*, *The Gershwin's Porgy and Bess*, *Jekyll and Hyde*, *Scandalous*, *Wonderland*, *9 to 5* and *Curtains*, as well as performing as a substitute in many other Broadway productions. She has won the Radio City Christmas Spectacular bass trombone chair five times. In addition to being an in-demand freelancer, Jennifer is an active studio musician. She can be heard streaming on shows like *Mrs. Maisel*, *Schmigadoon*, *Vivo*, and *Jerry Seinfeld at The Beacon*. Commercials include *The Incredibles 2*, *The Greatest Showman* and more. She has also been on over 40 big band recordings since 2009.

She is a member of three Grammy-nominated ensembles, Darcy James Argue's *Secret Society*, Alan Ferber Big Band and the *Terraza Big Band*. She has also performed on the Grammy-nominated cast albums for *The Gershwins' Porgy & Bess*, *9 to 5 The Musical* and *Curtains The Musical* as well as the Grammy-winning recording of *Beautiful - The Carole King Musical*.

Jen has performed, toured and/or recorded with groups including the *Vanguard Jazz Orchestra*, *Dizzy Gillespie All Star Band*, *Ken Peplowski Big Band*, *Miggy Augmented Jazz Orchestra*, *DIVA Jazz Orchestra*, *Arturo O'Farrill's Afro-Latin Jazz Orchestra*, *Birdland Big Band*, *Ayn Inserto Jazz Orchestra*, *Woody Herman Orchestra*, *John Yao and His 17 Piece Instrument*, *Generation Gap Big Band*, *Walking Distance*, *South Florida Jazz Orchestra*, *New Alchemy Jazz Orchestra*, *Steven Feifke Big Band*, and the *BMI Jazz Composers' Workshop*.

Jennifer is an XO Professional Brass artist and plays their 1240-LT bass trombone. She teaches bass trombone at Montclair State University in New Jersey and gives clinics and masterclasses regularly throughout the United States.

4A- Ellen Rowe

Ellen Rowe, jazz pianist and composer, is currently the Arthur F. Thurnau Professor of Jazz and Contemporary Improvisation at the University of Michigan. Ms. Rowe has released five CDs as a leader four of which, “Sylvan Way”, “Denali Pass”, “Wishing Well” and “Courage Music” are available at PKO records and at CDBaby.com. Her newest album “Momentum – Portraits of Women In Motion” was released to widespread critical acclaim in January 2019 and is available at Smokin’ Sleddog Records, ellenrowe.com, CDBaby.com, Spotify and other streaming services. Her various small groups have been featured at jazz festivals around the country, as well as at colleges and universities, and her “Momentum” band was recently selected to perform at the 2022 Jazz Education Network Conference.



Ms. Rowe's compositions and arrangements are published by Kendor Music, Doug Beach Music and Sierra Music Publishing and have been performed by ensembles including the Village Vanguard Orchestra, BBC Jazz Orchestra, U.S. Navy Commodores, Berlin and NDR Radio Jazz Orchestras, DIVA and the Perth Jazz Orchestra. She has received commissions from the Westchester Jazz Orchestra, Detroit Jazz Festival Orchestra, Minnesota Music Educators, Illinois Music Educators, Lawrence University's Fred Sturm Commissioning Project and the DIVA Jazz Orchestra, in addition to junior high and high school groups throughout the country. She has also been selected to conduct numerous All-State jazz ensembles, including the NafME All-Eastern and All-Northwest honors groups.



Looking to for new resources for literature, and the chance to add more diversity to the composers you put in front of your students? iJazzMusic.com offers quality jazz big band, jazz combo, and vocal jazz music, all available for immediate download.

In 2012, Jazz Education Abroad (JEA) was formed as a 501(c)(3) non-profit, tax-exempt organization. Its purpose is to reach out to countries in the Middle East, Asia, South America, Africa and Europe to present Jazz Education Festivals and Jazz Workshops as a way to increase each country's exposure to Jazz.

In November 2018, Jazz Education Abroad decided to form a non-profit jazz music publishing company (iJazzMusic.com), which would increase the visibility of its composers and arrangers, and assist Jazz Education Abroad in presenting these festivals and workshops. The composers and arrangers invited to join iJazzMusic.com are some of the most outstanding writers from Europe, Asia, and South America, as well as selected composers and arrangers from the United States.

IJazzMusic has a marketing plan that is focused on Europe, Asia, and South America, where downloadable printed music is not readily available, but where there are outstanding schools, communities, and professional jazz ensembles. In addition, having new jazz materials available from composers and arrangers in Europe, Asia, and South America, as well as selected composers and arrangers from the United States jazz community, will be very exciting and welcome for jazz educators in the United States.

Any proceeds from JEA or IJazzMusic go back into jazz education and needy programs throughout the world

As an added feature, the JEA faculty and staff, the JEA Board of Directors, and the JEA Advisory Board have free downloadable hand-outs, articles, and information about jazz education, jazz ensembles, jazz performance and jazz master classes at www.jazzeducationabroad.org/education

The composers and arrangers invited to join iJazzMusic.com are some of the most outstanding writers from Europe, Asia, and South America, as well as selected composers and arrangers from the United States.

If you have questions or need assistance in purchasing music, please **contact:**
info@ijazzmusic.com and visit <https://www.ijazzmusic.com/>

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Waukee Middle School, Waukee Iowa

Who is it for?

Any director looking for hands-on instruction from Iowa's top educators to learn pedagogical techniques to develop young rhythm section players, as well as approaches to implementing improvisation and jazz theory into jazz rehearsals.

Faculty

Drum Set: Greg Forney, Okoboji High School, retired
Piano: Steve Shanley, Director of Jazz Studies & Coordinator of Music Education, Coe College
Bass: Dave Kobberdahl, Valley High School and Fairmeadows Elementary, West Des Moines
Improvisation: Ryan Meyer, Denison Community Schools, Mary Crandall, Waukee Middle School

Space is limited. Register at www.jeiowa.org

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“One of the things I like about jazz, kid, is I don’t know what’s going to happen next.”

Bix Beiderbecke

The JEI Newsletter is
edited by
Michael Omarzu