

TEACHING JAZZ BAND--RANDOM THOUGHTS

RHYTHM SECTION

DRUMS

- Get as much sound as possible from the hi-hat cymbals.
- It is good for the drummer to play a lead-in at the beginning of the tune.
- The drummer should set up fills, instead of just what is marked on their part.
- In a swing tune, the bass drum should only be used for “hits”, “kicks”, and delineating form, not on every beat.
- The drummer’s function is to keep time AND establish the stylistic feel (“groove”).
- Ride cymbal and hi-hat are the most important for swing.
- Stick placement is important to a sustained, consistent sound on the ride cymbal.
- It is important for the drummer to use a variety of sticks, brushes, etc., so the sound does not become monotonous. When there are changes in the chart, the drummer should make a change.
- Hi-hat “pops” on 2 & 4 with a “chick” sound.
- If the drummer kicks the “and” of four, he shouldn’t play on the downbeat of the next bar.
- The drum set should be placed as close to the trombone section as possible.
- The drum set should be tuned high for jazz, not the “boomy” sound that rock drummers use.
- Avoid cymbals at break points, so they don’t ring through.
- When the drummer is playing behind a soloist, he should fill to the ends of the phrases, lead in at the beginning of the solo, and use the left hand more to encourage the soloist.
- The drum equipment should be positioned within easy reach. If you have to reach, you lose time.
- Don’t play in the same place on the ride cymbal. Move in an oval pattern for a variety of sound.

BASS

- The bass serves the dual function of providing the rhythmic and harmonic foundation.
- The ability to play a walking bass line is paramount. It is OK for an inexperienced player to play quarter notes on the roots of the chords until they are able to move diatonically and chromatically to create a walking bass line. Remember, **TIME IS ALWAYS THE MOST IMPORTANT FUNCTION OF THE BASS PLAYER!**
- Rules for playing swing:
 - a. Place the root of the chord on the downbeat of each chord change.
 - b. It is OK to precede the root with a half step.
 - c. Fill in with chord tones, appropriate scale tones, chromatic movement, etc.
- It is extremely important to set the amp for a characteristic jazz bass sound. Most inexperienced players do not have enough treble in the sound, which creates a “boomy” effect that does not have clarity.
- The bass amp should be up off the floor on a stand or chair, and should be turned towards the band.
- If you use an acoustic bass, be sure the strings are close to the fingerboard. This will give better projection.

PIANO

- The pianist’s role is to provide harmonic background with rhythmic punctuation.
- The damper pedal should only be used during ballads and special circumstances.
- Never double the bass line with the left hand. If it is written that way in a published chart, rewrite the piano part.
- The 3rd and 7th are the most important notes for delineating the harmony. The root and 5th are best left for the bass player.
- Don’t play more than necessary. The pianist does not have to play on every chord or beat.
- The range of chord voicings should fall between the C below middle C and the C on the second ledger line above the treble clef.
- Move the fewest fingers possible from chord to chord. Replay notes common to both chords.
- Harmonic interest can be enhanced by adding the 6th and the 9th for color.
- During full ensemble sections, the piano should not play the same rhythm as the band. He/she should try to fill in the gaps.
- Be sure to mike an acoustic piano.

GUITAR

- To play guitar in the swing style with the full ensemble, turn the amp way down and strum it with great energy and intensity.
- The guitar should comp like the piano.
- The guitar and piano can alternate comping during solos.
- The guitar provides harmonic color, rhythmic accompaniment, and percussive accompaniment.
- Guitarists need to listen to good jazz guitar players to get the correct amp settings and sound. Joe Pass, Barney Kessel, Johnny Smith are all excellent examples.

ENSEMBLE

- High school students generally use too much tongue and not enough air in ensemble playing.
- If the students rush the tempo, use a metronome.
- Listening to recordings and watching professionals play is extremely important.
- For improvement of the sax section sound, experiment with the Meyers 5 or 6 mouthpiece. Use a stiffer reed for jazz band.
- In full tutti sections, the saxes are color instruments. Don't try to get them to "cut through" the brass sound.
- Neither this: or this:is correct. The note is somewhere in the crack. A better terminology is to tell the students to play on the right or left side of the note. The position of the note in the line determines which it should be.
- Notes on "ands" are inflected or accented.
- Any upbeat note that precedes a rest is accented and played on the right hand side.
- This notation at the beginning of a phrase should be played on the left hand side, which makes the note longer.
- Always keep the phrasing in mind.
- Don't neglect releases! Whole notes generally should be cut off on beat four, because that is when the hi-hat plays.
- For improvement of intonation, look at the score and find doublings. Make the students aware of who else is playing the same part.
- When performing a tune, try to find a section where the rhythm section drops out,

whether or not the arrangement calls for it.

- Rehearse lead players and the rhythm section together to get stylistic ideas set.
- Use this device for teaching swing 8th notes.
Tongue the “ands” and slur to the beats.
- It is a good idea to write the melodic line for the drummer so he/she knows where the kicks are.
- Although the bass player is the heartbeat of the band, time is everyone’s responsibility.
- If you have a straight quarter note pattern, put the bass drum between the notes.
- Saxophone section should tune on a Bb major 9th chord (Bari-G, 2nd tenor-B, 1st tenor-D, 2nd alto-B, 1st alto-D). The lead alto player should play a little on the sharp side.
- Don’t play fall-offs until the tune is thoroughly learned.
- Shakes must be blown through. If a player is losing the shake, he should slow it down or eliminate it.
- You can practice artistic license in the interpretation of a jazz chart. Don’t be afraid to use your own imagination.
- Say choc-o-late pie when teaching quarter note triplets.
- Programming should include all styles for variety and educational purposes.
- It is good to do historical music for the education of the students--Woodchopper’s Ball, for example.
- Don’t conduct like the jazz band is a concert band. Conduct only as necessary.
- Vibrato should be added about half-way through a note.
- Posture: Be able to stand immediately without moving your feet. Don’t bend the air column by sitting in a “slouchy” position.
- Wait on a crescendo--hurry on a diminuendo.
- Always monitor the tone quality of the ensemble, at all dynamic levels.
- Don’t be afraid to exaggerate dynamics, especially the softer levels.
- Jazz articulations are not the same as concert band articulations. Learn to speak the jazz language.
- Think chamber music--listen and interact.
- Monitor the range. Don’t force the students to go beyond their range.

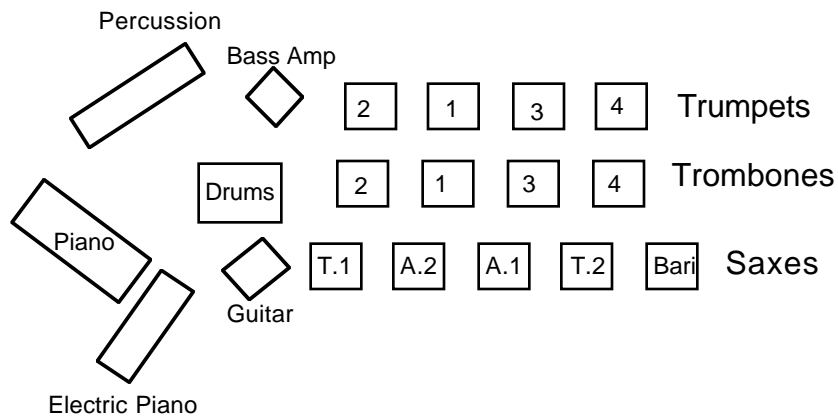
- Don't forgive too much, but constantly expect and demand. You must be the outer ear.
- Don't forget to "stroke" the kids in the band. Remove your "wrong note ears" sometimes.
- Tape yourself rehearsing the band and evaluate what you are or are not doing.

SOLOING (improvisation)

- All soloists (and for that matter, the whole band) should know the melody of the chart you are playing.
- The solo must be played in exactly the same style as the tune you are playing.
- The 8th note is the common denominator. Jazz soloing requires swing 8th's and rock soloing straight 8th's. This does not mean that all the notes should be 8th's, but the solo should be built around them.
- Soloists should be concerned about time, rhythms, space and then notes.
- The soloist and the rhythm section become a combo immediately, and need to interact. The drummer should follow the melodic contour of the soloist.
- Soloists should play rhythms, not chase notes, play with a good sound and listen to the drummer for rhythms to play in breaks.
- The soloists should practice jazz rhythms on the roots of the chords with the rhythm section, then the other notes of the chords. From there they can start going from note to note in the chord, and then playing diatonically or chromatically to the notes of the chord. This gives them a sense of direction as to where the changes are going.
- Soloists can use devices such as growls, quotes, trills, shakes, etc. to enhance their performance.

RHYTHM SECTION/BAND SETUP

w/4 tpts. & 4 bones



RHYTHM SECTION/BAND SETUP

w/5 tpts. & 5 bones

