



Maiden Voyage: Elements of a Quality Jazz Program in your First Teaching Job

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Be a Knowledgeable Educator that Plays and Listens to Jazz

- Find a community group that you can play in
- In remote areas, online lessons and courses are always a possibility. Your school might even provide some PD funding for this.
- Attend the International Music Camp Summer Professional Development Program
- Familiarize yourself with the rhythm section and learn the basics of each instrument
- Use your experience to model sound, style, and improvisation frequently.

Improvisation Is For Everyone

- Foster an environment in which students feel safe and supported by their peers and their teacher to take creative risks. Prioritize improvisation as a regular component of rehearsal. In this environment, improvisation becomes a normal activity.
- Learn to improvise on your primary instrument and others. Improvising on a secondary instrument allows students to see you model playing outside of your comfort zone.
- Replace the safety net with restrictions. Set limits on the number of notes, rhythmic values, measures, etc. This allows students to develop language within attainable parameters.
- Play-along recordings can be great supports for at home improvisation practice and hearing chord progressions.

Form and Theory is for Everyone

- Everyone in the room (not just the rhythm section) should learn the bass line, form, and chord progression.
 - Start with learning root motion vocally (using numbers according to chord function), and then with instruments. Expand from there to include chord tones, voice leading, and scales for each chord.
 - The entire band can cue the top of the form by clapping, or can do different movements for each section of the form.
 - "Drop the needle" exercise is also a fun game. Have the rhythm section start anywhere in the form and see how long it takes the wind instruments to find their spot. You can also do this with recordings.
- Do ear training exercises (intervals, both chording and melodic) regularly.
- Learn tunes by ear. Apply theory knowledge to arrange and compose together.

Listening

- Teach the history of jazz as an aural art form.
- Create a listening library, or if students have access to digital music create a playlist that you can share with students.
- Encourage students to take the time to listen to full albums. This is getting to be a lost practice.
- Listen together as part of class time. Include both structured listening assignments and informal sharing of what students are listening to.

- Ideas: 5 min listening sessions during rehearsal, guided listening exercises (see QR resources), challenges such as “find the key area”, “name the style”, or “count how many times you heard space in the solo”.
- Model knowing the names and contributions of the artists you share in class.
- Model focused listening.
- Have students lead brief listening sessions, including sharing some information about the artist(s).

Select Quality Repertoire

- The Manitoba Band Association Jazz Repertoire list is a great place to start (available on MBA website and through “QR” link)
- Program quality jazz standards. There are many good accessible arrangements for beginning and intermediate ensembles available, or you can teach standards by ear.
- Aim for balanced programming that includes swing at a variety of tempos, as well as straight (i.e., latin-influenced, hip-hop, funk) styles. Look for opportunities to teach form (i.e., major and minor blues, modal, AABA, rhythm changes).
- Connect to your students about what they are listening to and use this to inform repertoire. What can students learn by adapting a “non-jazz” tune to jazz ensemble?
- Use your lifelines. Talk to your colleagues about programming, and collect concert programs. Programs from previous years’ Winnipeg Classic 107 Radio Jazz Band Festivals are available on the MBA Website.

Enrichment Opportunities

- Get out there and play with your ensembles! The mall food court, greenhouses, coffee shops, restaurants, school hallways, senior’s homes, elementary schools, athletic events, community fairs, and open houses are all great possibilities.
- Winnipeg Jazz Orchestra workshops are a tremendous value and a great day of enrichment.
- If an artist is coming to town, can you have a workshop with them? If there is an evening concert, can you open for them?
- Go to live concerts as much as possible. Consider making it a priority to attend a live concert as a group.
- Play with and for other school ensembles in your area. Consider hosting a jam session with all of the students as part of the events.

Suggested Resources:

- Teaching Music Through Performance in Jazz (all volumes)
- Real Easy Books (Sher Publishing) Great for combo!
- www.learnjazzstandards.com

Please follow the “QR” code to access supplementary files, including repertoire lists, sample listening assignments, a year beginning jazz ensemble letter, and handouts from previous presentations on teaching listening and improvisation.

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