



Jazz Band/Improvisation Rehearsal Techniques for the High School Band Director

**CLINICIAN:
Dr. Aric Schneller**

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"Jazz Band/Improvisation Rehearsal Techniques for the High School Band Director"

Sam Houston State University

Dr. Aric Schneller, Director of Jazz Studies

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I. Jazz Band Rehearsal Techniques

- Jazz band set-up chart (See last page)
- Tuning Exercises without a tuner
- Play recordings (entirely or portions thereof) before sight-reading for ear-mapping
- Director singing rhythm & Style, then verbal count-off with subdivision
- Sight-reading: Playing-through (with mistakes) vs. stopping
- Slow practice makes fast progress
- Have band sing parts for rhythm, style and melodic shape, then play
- Chord Stacking the horn section out of time
- Creating rehearsal loops of problem spots
- Stopping points: Fix problems and short explanations (especially for rest purposes with one's brass section)
- Brass & saxophones: Play with less tongue unless marked
- Controlled chaos: Bring band back in by counting-off
- Reminding each section of their roles & responsibilities
- Saxophones fingering their notes without sound
- Always praise band for progress
- Swing rehearsal-exercises/problem spots no matter what the style
- Rehearse trumpets 8vb regularly on high-note sections

II. Jazz Band Improvisation Techniques

- Let's begin together learning "Bags Groove" by ear
- Learn Melody with voice/instrument
- Learn duet harmony line
- Play-a-long with Miles Davis recording
- Call & response blues licks
- Embellishments to melody
- Blues scale (1, b3, 4, #4/b5, 5, b7, 8)
- 4-step rhythm exercise (single note & blues scale) to develop the "swing feel"
- Playing major, harmonic minor, and/or blues scales over harmonic landscape
- Group Improvisation (safety in numbers) interspersed with individual solos
- Go around the horn (everyone take a solo)
- Play melody/harmony out to end tune

III. More ideas to consider for learning jazz improvisation:

- Teach beginners by ear
- Any language (English, French, German, etc.....Jazz) is first learned by ear
- Jazz = Blues, Swing, Bach (ii7-V7-I)
- Natural learning process:
 - Observation
 - Imitation
 - Trial & Error
- Play-a-long with actual jazz recordings
- Call and Response exercises that are the beginnings of "Jazz Conversation & Communication (earliest historical approach to jazz improvisation)

- The Blues is in the very fabric of most, if not all, American music – It's already in our mind's ear, and in our blood
- All jazz musicians play, or continually strive to play, with excellent rhythm (i.e., quarter notes on/off the beat, swinging 8th notes, & double-time 16th notes)

IV. Ideas Jazz Transcription Process:

- Listen to one's desired solo, over and over again, until the goal of singing it from memory with the recording becomes unstoppable
- Listening to, learning and internalizing the style and language of the role model being transcribed
- Learning (ii7-V7-I) language in both major and minor tonalities from one's transcription
- Performing the transcription for an audience

V. Afterthoughts regarding today's presentation:

- No wrong notes in jazz improvisation, just rhythm that may not swing very well. "It don't mean a thing if it ain't got that swing." (Duke Ellington)
- As quoted by Wynton Marsalis on numerous occasions, Jazz is made up of "Blues & Swing."
- Acquire the "taste" for jazz, or getting "bit" by the jazz bug, by non-stop listening to the music and going to live performances
- Lighting the students "fire" by your enthusiasm for jazz
- Playing along with YouTube videos of jazz artists

Sample of Suggested Jazz Materials

Coker, Jerry. *Improvising Jazz*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1964. 115p.

Coker, Jerry. *The Teaching of Jazz*. Rottenburg, West Germany: Advance Music Publishing, 1989. 175p. (ISBN 3-89221-028-4)

Haerle, Dan. *The Jazz Language: A Theory Text for Jazz Composition and Improvisation*. Milwaukee, WI.: Hal Leonard Pub., 1980. 58p.

Haerle, Dan. *Jazz Piano Voicing Skills: A Method For Individual Or Class Study*. New Albany, IN.; Jamey Aebersold Jazz, Inc., 1994. 153p.

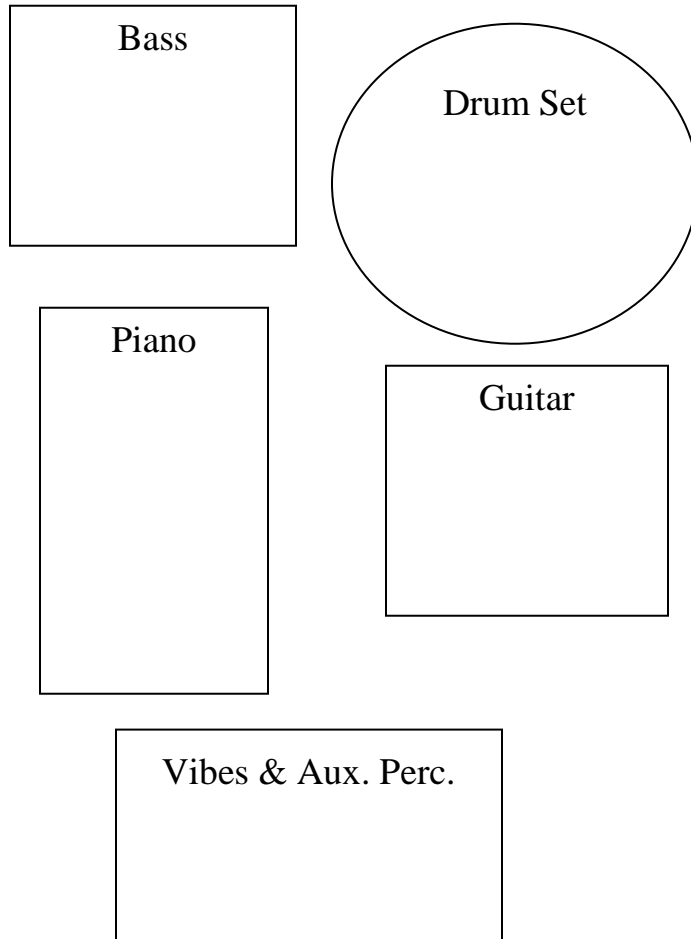
Haerle, Dan. *The Jazz Sound: A Guide to Tune Analysis and Chord/Scale Choices for Improvisation*. Milwaukee, WI.: Hal Leonard Pub., 1989. 88p.

Haerle, Dan. *Scales for Jazz Improvisation*. Miami, Florida: Belwin, Inc., 1975. 52p

Steinel, Mike. *Building A Jazz Vocabulary: A Resource for Learning Jazz Improvisation*. Milwaukee, WI.: Hal Leonard Pub., 1995. 177p.

JAZZ ENSEMBLE SET-UP CHART

(Saxes on floor, trombones on 1st tier of risers, trumpets on 2nd tier of risers)



TRUMPETS 5 th	3 rd	Lead	2 nd /Split Lead	4 th
TROMBONES 4 TH Bass	2 nd /Split Lead	Lead	3 rd	5 th Bass
SAXOPHONES Lead Tenor	2 nd Alto	Lead Alto	2 nd Tenor	Baritone

Director
Aric Schneller