



**Small Town Swing – Starting and
Maintaining a Jazz Program in a Small
School**

CLINICIAN:

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SPONSOR:

ATSSB

**Texas Bandmasters Association
2016 Convention/Clinic**

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HENRY B. GONZALEZ CONVENTION CENTER

SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

Small Town Swing
Starting and Maintaining a Jazz Program In A Small School
Texas Bandmasters Association Convention
8:00 am July 23, 2016
Michael Childs - Stephenville High School

Why should I start a jazz program in my school?

- Opportunity to expand musical experience with a truly American art form.
- Exposure to more musical styles and improvisation
- Teaches advanced skills in rhythm reading, increases range & articulation
- Enhances what you're already doing. They're playing more!
- Great PR for the program and the school
- Recruiting tool – at elementary & middle schools
- ITS FUN!!!

Where do I start, especially if I don't have a jazz background?

- The good news: Internet! There are so many resources online for listening, performance practices, etc.
 - Youtube
 - Spotify
 - iTunes
 - etc.
- Listen, listen, listen!
 - To who? Count Basie, Gordon Goodwin, Duke Ellington, Buddy Rich, Stan Kenton
 - Where?
 - Online
 - Live – college jazz festivals, local groups, etc. (road trip!)
- Peer assistance
 - Seek out colleagues that could help or clinic your band
 - Local college teachers (helps their recruiting too)
 - Yellowboard (again, internet!)
- Be willing to pull your instrument out and play along (or play ahead of time) to help develop feel. Pick up a bass guitar & learn the basics.
- ATSSB jazz audition CD
 - Charts & recordings are a good resource for those just starting out!
- Texts
 - Essential Elements for Jazz by Mike Steinel (publ. Hal Leonard)
 - Smart Music
 - Jazz Ensemble Director's Handbook by Richard Lawn (publ. Hal Leonard)

What do I program?

- Option 1 - My preference: start with swing. Gets them into learning the style immediately
- Option 2 - Start with what they know - Pop/rock tunes that might get them hooked in, then start teaching new styles

- How?
 - Start like you would in concert setting: with the fundamentals; rhythm, tone (Essential Elements for Jazz is a great starting place)
 - I like to start with classic charts (from Jazz Classics for Young Jazz Ensemble) such as Moten Swing, Blue Skies, etc. They are good arrangements simplified from the original. There are lots of reference recordings to draw from, and you can integrate history. Mark Taylor also takes many standards and writes good arrangements.

Instrumentation

- Typical – 5-4-4 winds & rhythm section, but 3-3-3 works! My 1st class had 1 tpt, 1 sax, 2 bones, bass and 3 drummers. Bought combo charts and rewrote piano parts for mallet players. They would rotate on drumset.
- Hard part – recruiting a keyboard & bass (more on this below)
- Keyboard (or mallet) bass is better than no bass!
- Guitar – fill out chordal portion of the rhythm section
- Many publishers now include “non-traditional” instrumentations in their charts.

Set up

- Traditional 5-5-5 with lead players in the center
- Sax variations – B,T1, A1, A2, T2 sax setup (moves bari closer to bass player). Can move bass trombone to inside as well.
- “Rehearsal in the round”

Equipment needs

- Necessities
 - Rhythm section equipment – drumset, keyboard and amp, bass and amp,
 - PA system, preferably 8 channel for mics, microphones & stands
 - Jazz mouthpieces for saxophones?
- Wish list
 - Vibes
 - Latin percussion – congas, timbales, shaker, claves

Rhythm Section – what do I do with these guys?

- Things that will make each instrument sound better
 - Piano
 - *rarely (as in NEVER) use the sus pedal*
 - *Comping patterns for the piano/guitar – many of the easier arrangements give written voicings & rhythmic ideas*
 - *More advanced players can experiment with their own voicings – 3rd & 7th are primary colors to use. Stay out of the bass players territory (low range, roots): shell voicings 379 or 735*
 - Bass – little tougher unless you have someone with strings background already.
 - Try to start someone that already plays a bass clef instrument
 - *Priority of the bassist is they MUST have a strong sense of rhythm. Correct rhythms and steady time initially take precedence over right notes (technique will follow)*
 - *Tone from the instrument –*

- *hand position & where it is on the string affect the tone (closer to fretboard = mellow tone, closer to the bridge = cleaner articulation – better for latin & funk),*
 - *EQ on the amp – too much bass = muddy, too much treble = thin tone & noisy (fret noise)*
 - *Walking pattern –written bass lines on easier arrangements.*
 - *Advancing players can start building their own basslines by using the “basic formula” 1235 8765*
- Guitar – Freddie Green style (“Four on the Floor”)
 - Tone – avoid distortion. Shoot for a “clean” sound
 - Use pickups close to the body/fretboard for a mellow sound
 - EQ the amp to use less highs & more mid/low
 - Comping – many arrangements have basic chord structures in their arrangements now. Alfred has a chord voicing sheet they include in most all of their charts now. However, classic voicings avoid the outer (1st & 6th) strings.
 - *No “power chords!”*
- Drumset
 - listen, Listen, LISTEN!!! Check out recordings of Basie for feel. Authentic swing style is challenging because they’ve not heard much (if any) of that style
 - Swing style & timbre is focused on the ride & hi-hat cymbals, whereas rock is more snare & bass drum. (Swing is 85% cymbals, rock is 85% snare/kick). So getting the right hand swing feel is paramount.
 - Bass drum is NOT used to keep time.
 - Fills – use mostly snare & less focus on toms.
 - More advanced ideas
 - *Setup figures – use snare or kick on the downbeat before.*
 - *Also- use these guidelines for setups: snare/kick for short sounds, cymbals for long sounds*
 - Sticks – use a smaller bead (or barrel shape) like Peter Erskine or Dave Weckl. NOT snare drum sticks (SD1)
- Resource texts
 - Piano
 - Frank Mantooth, *Voicings for Jazz Keyboard*
 - Dan Haerle, *Jazz Piano Voicing Skills*
 - Bass
 - Alfred’s Electric Bass Method
 - Jim Stinnett, *Creating Walking Bass Lines*
 - Kris Berg, *Bass Lines In Minutes*
 - Drumset
 - Alfred’s Drumset Method (a fantastic book!)
 - Steve Houghton *Essential Styles for Drummer and Bassist (a combo book that’s a little more advanced but a great text)*
 - Peter Erskine *Drumset Essentials vol. 1-3 (3 gets pretty advanced)*
 - Guitar
 - Jack Grassel *Jazz Rhythm Guitar, The Complete Guide*
 - Jack Peterson *Chords Galore*

Improvisation

- Chops Monster book – guided improv. And ear training techniques – imitate call & response examples. Very logical progression. (I use a different sequence)
- Aebersold records – not guided
- Why not just use blues scale? Not every cord sounds good with b3 (Maj 7 chord). Better choices – pentatonic
- Listen, listen, listen! The internet is your friend! Curate a Spotify or Youtube list and share it to your students

Listening (in jazz score order)

Alto

Cannonball Adderly
Phil Woods
Charlie Parker
Eric Marienthal
Johnny Hodges

Tenor

Stan Getz
Dexter Gordon
Joshua Redman
Zoot Sims
Michael Brecker

Baritone

Pepper Adams
Gerry Mulligan
Gary Smulyan

Trumpet

Clifford Brown
Miles Davis
Louis Armstrong
Dizzy Gillespie
Clark Terry
Wynton Marsalis

Trombone

JJ Johnson
Bill Watrous
Wycliffe Gordon
Steve Turre
Slide Hampton

Piano

Nat “King” Cole
Oscar Peterson
Duke Ellington
Count Basie
Herbie Hancock

Guitar

Joe Pass
Charlie Christian
Jim Hall
Freddie Green
Pat Metheny

Bass

Ray Brown
Christian McBride
Jaco Pastorius
Ron Carter
Charles Mingus

Drums

Sonny Payne
Mel Lewis
Buddy Rich
Peter Erskine
Max Roach

Other resources

Web

- Marina Music - www.marinamusic.com - great resource for reference recordings of arrangements
- JW Pepper – www.jwpepper.com
- Pender’s Music – www.pendersmusic.com
- Jamie Aebersold – www.aebersold.com

Textbooks and Materials

- Essential Elements for Jazz – great text for beginner jazz students! They also have a series of arrangements that correspond to the books.
- First Year Collection for Jazz Ensemble - Alfred
- Jazz Classics for Young Jazz Ensemble – Hal Leonard

- Best of Belwin Jazz – Belwin
- Kendor Konvertables Series – Kendor
- Doug Beach Series – Kendor
- Improvisation – Chops Monster, Shelley Berg
- 10 minute jazz warmups -
- Smartmusic

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