



**Texas Bandmasters Association
Convention/Clinic July 21-23, 2022**

**Creating a Culture of Confident
Improvisors: Inside a Rehearsal with
Paschal Jazz**

**CLINICIAN:
Matt Sawyer**

DEMO GROUP: Paschal HS Jazz



Creating a Culture of Confident Improvisors: Inside a Rehearsal with Paschal Jazz

Matt Sawyer, Clinician

Demonstration Group: The Paschal High School Jazz Program
Fort Worth, TX, Fort Worth ISD

Friday, July 22, 2022

Bridge Hall, Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center, San Antonio, TX

As part of the 75th Texas Bandmasters Association Convention/Clinic

Clinic Outline and Overview

- 1) Opening Performance: *Happy Go Lucky Local* by Duke Ellington
- 2) Long Tones and Tuning Up
- 3) Regular Daily Warm-up: *A Study in Blues and Improvising* and *Spiderweb Variations*
- 4) Extended Warm-up: ii V7 I Another Direction and Triplet Variations, Other Resources
- 5) Teaching strategies on the Daily Warm-up for students new to jazz/your developing top group or your second group
- 6) TMEA All State Jazz-State Improv Etude "I Have Met Miss Jones" Studies
- 7) Rehearsal on Big Band Tunes with 3 focus points:
 - Very wide Basie dynamics
 - Confidence in open improvised solo sections, solis, and written parts to be played *with personality* and improvised slightly
 - Creating excitement during the Shout Chorus

Teaching examples from the following big band charts that are central to our culture and program:

- a. *Blues Machine* by Michael Sweeney
 - b. *Back to the Jungle* by Ken Harris
 - c. *Easy Money* by Benny Carter
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- 8) Final Q & A then Closing Performance: *The Sheik of Araby* by Smith/Wheeler/Snyder arr. Duke Ellington

To the Audience: IMMERSE YOURSELF IN THIS CLINIC!

Everyone will have a different takeaway, perspective and needs.

The goal for this clinic is to be immersed the same way the students are (and constantly think of what strategies you can bring back to your students).

You'll have all the same warm-up music the students are looking at in a hand-out form and here they are digitally on Google Drive:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1SgBo1Nbq5i6mqbnpcf0j7yJGwbl8xa7T?usp=sharing>

I will continue to add to this Google Drive and provide more resources following this clinic.

WAYS TO IMMERSE:

Be a fly on the wall and observe the REAL, but also:

Follow along and make notes, highlight, talk quietly to your neighbor, and feel free to ask a question by raising your hand if it can benefit yours or someone else's clinic experience. If you would like something demonstrated again, that is also great!

After the clinic, please email me at matthew.sawyer@fwisd.org and I will be happy to answer any questions and/or provide more resources!

Read this before the clinic:

(It describes the goals of the clinic in more detail)

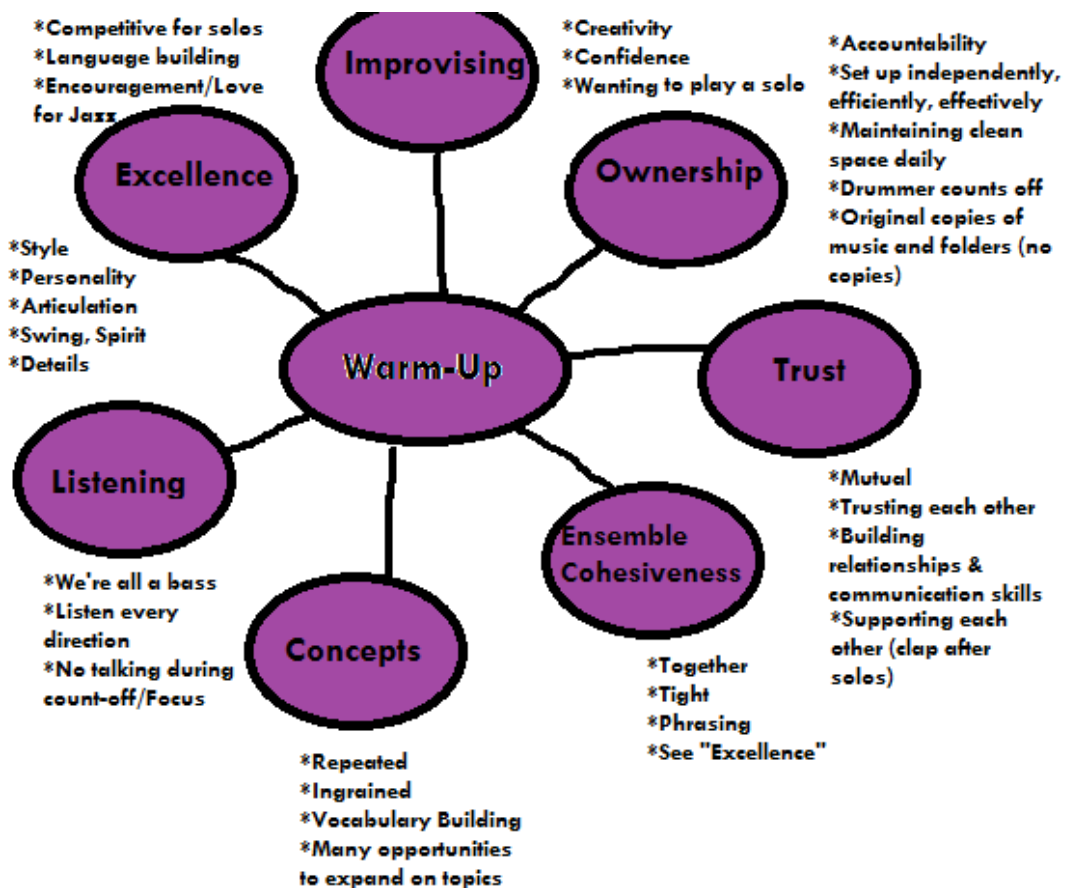
This is the Clinic Description that I provided to TBA. The bullet points delve deeper:

Paschal HS Jazz Director Matt Sawyer will give a **guided demonstration** of what occurs daily in his rehearsals to help **build a culture of confidence** in improvising and playing jazz for **all musicians** in his program.

- **To immerse yourself in this clinic, follow along** just like you are a member of the ensemble.
 - The students play this warm-up every day and most are very familiar with it—It is ingrained in our culture. I still have to ask them “what did we just play?” As an audience member, you can feel free to call out answers just as the students do as you learn how to define each part of the warm-up.
 - I will have the students write things down and check their neighbor's work. Please do the same!

- **Building a Culture of Confidence for ALL Musicians in the program:**
 - Positive and supportive atmosphere—students cheer each other on, clap during and after solos, and I (and the students) give verbal and nonverbal feedback that is **specific** and **direct**.
 - ALL students participate in soloing. They either volunteer, are called on, asked to embellish or demonstrate a part, or they participate collectively.
 - **There are times (many times) when one of the following will happen and here are effective ways to respond in the moment:
 - Situation One: The student does not want to solo—they are shy, not feeling well, or just have inhibitions about performing at that moment.
 - EFFECTIVE RESPONSES: 1) Move on and do not dwell-let them know it's not a big deal, 2) Encourage and stay positive, with even a short reflection to them of a moment you felt the same way, and/or 3) "Let's have you play that as a duet," or "let's all solo together there."
 - Situation Two: Students are **competing** to have a feature or solo spot or feel left out. This is a great problem to have when the culture is allowing the competitive element to exist and grow, but it must be put in check in a healthy way to maintain a caring and positive learning environment.
 - EFFECTIVE RESPONSES: 1) "Let's hear you both try it and then I'll make a decision." 2) "Have it by tomorrow and we'll hold an audition for the solo." 3) "You'll get your moment. This one fits this player today, but maybe you next time." 4) "This fits you like a glove but I want others to give it a try." 5) "Work hard, study and try to match the recording, and the opportunity will come."

This includes a **daily warmup structure that sets the tone for the rehearsal** and is **inclusive** and **accessible** to all students.



In addition to **daily repetition building confidence**, strategies that will be demonstrated include:

- 1) Students **singing then playing**
 - I use this one **CONSTANTLY!** We use "natural syllables" (how would you sing it naturally without worrying about exact matching of syllables) but try to agree on most things.
 - This fixes Swing Feel and Ensemble Cohesion. It also creates a more aware soloist/improviser and **builds confidence**.
 - It's fun and easy to do!
- 2) **Modeling and imitating**
 - I use YouTube recordings and have examples as ready as possible.
 - I play-you play or student demonstration
- 3) *(If there was more time in today's clinic)* Additionally mentoring one another in small groups with rhythmic and transcription focus.
 - Pre-assign small groups to work together on learning a solo or tune by ear and chord changes for the rhythm section. These groups can be random or be by

section, or by mentor-mentee. It is also good to make sure the students in each group get along and that the environment will be positive and monitored for effectiveness.

4) Students **learn a number of ways** and this *immersive clinic* will **offer many creative ways to see growth in every student in the program.**

- This is my favorite bullet point!
- WAYS I TEACH as demonstrated in this clinic:
 - Listening and Video Examples
 - Singing and Playing, Modeling and Imitating
 - I move constantly (never in one spot for too long) and have a sense of purpose/urgency. I communicate confidently (even on a tangent!) and try to do this in 2 ways: 1) To the whole group or a section, or 2) To a specific student focusing on growing a specific skill set that day. *Reminders to the group constantly:* Why am I hanging out near the trombones? What is my goal while working with the drummer? Should you be listening? What are you listening for? ALWAYS finding a way to increase their awareness.
 - Write it on the board for the Visual Learners. Use different colors.
 - Have everyone learn and play the same thing together.
 - Check for understanding after a concept is taught and re-taught by any of the above methods and asking lots of questions to as many students as possible. It is also okay to have “go to” students who want to share their knowledge! But you want to help everyone truly understand the concept before moving on and then repeat/review the concept during the next class.
 - Think of all learners and what they need/how they learn most effectively. Try something else if it’s not working or abandon ship and re-assess and try a different day. Reflect on your teaching methods and make the modifications necessary.

IMMERSE YOURSELF IN THIS CLINIC!

****FOLLOWING ALONG During the Guided Demonstration:**

1. *Happy Go Lucky Local* performance

- a. Performed by the 2021-2022 Paschal Jazz Ensemble. Featuring lots of solo spots of mostly written material that the students will be embellishing-trying to emulate the Duke Ellington Orchestra musicians. There are sections I've opened up for improvising and other sections changed to imitate recordings that inspired our group (ex. a live recording of Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra double-time swinging a section that normally would be regular time): [LCJO, Happy Go Lucky Local - YouTube](#)
 - i. Purpose of this opening performance is to demonstrate how these solo spots develop personality and create confidence in the musicians. There are solo spots for piano, bass, aux percussion, drum set, 4 trumpet players, alto, bari, tenor, and guitar, and then solis for all sections.
 - ii. Blues inflection is taught really well with this piece. It imitates train sounds, which historically reflects the time period and the life of a traveling jazz musician at that time.
 - iii. The soloists are playing over one or two chords on the ostinato, or they play over a 12 bar blues in the opened up sections.
 - iv. This piece provides so much room to create very exciting moments and challenges us constantly to have better ensemble cohesion and tuning.
2. Long Tones: These are 16 counts or 4 measures in the key of B-flat, one octave scale, that start soft but supported and gradually grow together to biggest but best sound (pp to ff).
 - a. DEMONSTRATION GROUPS: Both the 2021-2022 Paschal Jazz Ensemble (top group) and the 2022-2023 incoming top group. Students will be switching out.
 - b. Rhythm section vamps and comps chords on each scale degree in a style chosen by the director (swing or Latin/Samba are my go-to). Chord qualities for the rhythm section can be all Major, all Minor, etc. and should be defined by the director: ex. "Play all major chords today, rhythm section. Swing style."
 - c. I learned this method from a clinic by Christopher Dorsey, director at Dillard Center for the Arts in Florida. He calls this "Spiderweb."
 - d. Tuning: If we are really not sounding good or need that moment, we'll take a quick A on the piano for the saxophones and strings and then a B-flat on the piano for the brass. Sometimes, we have to build the band from the bottom up (similar to F around the Room) and get our listening and tuning right.
3. Regular Daily Warm-up
 - a. The **biggest** part of our culture is what this warm-up has done for us! The diagram above explains it in a better visual format (for our visual learners), but here are some ways I have observed it highly benefiting our program: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1eOfrvWgrLisFC6yhUmoAgbbgf6YYdkPB/view?usp=sharing>

In addition, this PowerPoint provides step-by-step the Warm-Up and what each part of the warm-up is:

https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/17J9DIwiGSGmhrrDBDJI8PW_RAtbJZQUW/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=105221630807352598368&rtopf=true&sd=true

This PowerPoint will be displayed during the clinic for reference, as will the above Google Drive link PDF outline.

- b. What are the **Spiderweb variations**? Christopher Dorsey defined Spiderweb to be the long tones that start off the rehearsal. Right afterward, the warm-up continues with a 2 octave Chromatic pattern, and that is what I am calling “Spiderweb Variations.” As Dorsey had stated in his Midwest Clinic presentation a few years back, these teach technique and style, and make sure the brass players get properly warmed up in the higher range. **It sets them up for success.**
4. Extended Warm-up: ii V7 I Another Direction and Triplet Variations, Other Resources
 - a. **Vocabulary Building** is the biggest confidence builder for our students. After initially getting comfortable with a Blues progression in B-Flat, we want to also play in F and other keys, and then begin defining what a ii V7 I is.
 - i. **How to spot a ii V7 I:** Think in scale degrees:

C	D	E	F	G	A	B	C
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1 (8)

When looking at a chord progression (chords are on top of the staff), the ii chord is a minor 7 chord (ex. D minor, most commonly indicated as D-), the V7 chord is a Dominant chord (hence the 7 which implies b7 or lowered 7 of the major scale— which is a blues sound {Vs. a Major or Minor sound}, and then the 1 chord, marking Roman Numeral I, takes us back home.

Further finding it and analyzing it: Look back a measure from the 1 chord (Root) and you’ll see a V7 chord and right before that a ii chord. If we are in B-flat, the ii V7 I would be C- (C minor) then F7 then B-flat/Bb. The I Chord could be indicated with a triangle after or say Major 7/Maj 7. This is a Major sound, and very happy-not a sad or Minor sound, and not a Blues sound/Dominant chord.

- **“ii V7 I Another Direction”** is a warm-up exploring ii V7 I vocabulary in 6 keys (descends by whole steps) and the lines we are studying RESOLVE to the 5th of the 1 chord. A lot of our vocabulary building resolves to the 3rd of the home chord/root or Targets the 3rd of each chord of the ii V7 I as the line moves, but this one goes “another direction” and resolves to the 5th. **Bonus: These lines are easily singable.**

- **Triplet Variations:** These are vocabulary builders that involve arpeggiating the ii chord up and then going down the scale to target the 3rd of the root/1 chord. As the name implies, the arpeggio moves rhythmically in triplets. This is also in 6 keys and follows the same pattern approach as “Another Direction.”
 - **Other Resources:** If we need more **Tuning** time, we’ll play *Tuning By Chords* by Rayburn Wright, where the students have to listen for unisons and then harmony. I’ll direct each note or play in time and randomly hold a key spot. Sometimes we’ll need to build each chord to really hone in. This is great right before diving into big band chart rehearsal. For more **Vocabulary Building**, we read several lines out of the ii V7 I Volume 3 Jamey Aebersold, and we also have “Cry Me a River” studies (provided here: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/13lwGan7HobHGQcgE5CF3ScaYnOQbX78g?usp=sharing>) and minor ii V7 i studies. These are more advanced and more elaborate, but are the next step in vocabulary building and tune learning.
5. **Teaching strategies on the Daily Warm-up for students new to jazz/your developing top group or your second group:**
- Paschal Jazz Band (the second group—a hybrid of this year’s and last year’s group) will be the demonstration group here, with the help of director **Lance Walker** (also our Director of Bands).
 - The goal is for the audience to see the REAL of what happens from the ground up (or almost the ground up). **The second group or a developing group is where the learning really takes place—for both the Teacher and the Student!**
 - Slow and steady (but not too overly slow as students will get bored)—but ENGAGING REHEARSALS wins the race. Students are developing their skills in Jazz here. This part of the presentation will briefly demonstrate strategies for the first day the jazz band meets and how they learn the **Regular Warm-up** together.
6. **TMEA All State Jazz—State Improv Etude “I Have Met Miss Jones.”**
- a. Demo group is back to the 2022-2023 Paschal Jazz Ensemble.
 - b. I made a Video Tutorial on YouTube: https://youtu.be/Q_wiUTAEDvE and here is a PDF you’ll need to follow along of all the study materials: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1rQu_lhYqo3cx-CmG0bEgRh92DVM9vV-n/view?usp=sharing
 - c. Paschal Jazz will demonstrate a few of the studies as a full group. I will show how I teach the All State Jazz Materials and work to guide the students to success through **repetition of vocabulary building**, which **builds confident improvisors**.
 - d. Important Note: The All State Jazz Process happens quickly into the school year, as we all aware, and right when Marching Season is really making progress. Students are very busy, and we are very busy. Therefore:
 - i. It is important to have a plan to hear ALL students trying out. I listen to each student in the top group 3 times total (15 minutes each) and then

open up times for volunteers. The volunteers can sign up for as many listening slots available!

This method holds the students accountable.

Pre-COVID and now (this coming school year), I required/am requiring all students in the top group to audition and highly encouraging any students in the second group.

During COVID, I tried different things—one year, it was completely optional but was such a big part of the class, most tried out. I also took away the required listening requirement and opened up listening times for volunteers. This was successful and inspirational. I am returning to the required portion because it gives the top group a sense of “we all do this together, and we do it well.” But just as important, it sets them up to be better musicians and people.

To get all the listenings in—

It does not have to be 3—it is whatever works for your schedule. The main thing is, decide to what to and stick with it. The Expectations should be CLEAR and their grade should be reflected (or some other consequence) by the effort they put into learning the music. We cannot learn it for them. I have learned that more listening sessions does not equal success (think **Quality Over Quantity**).

I am always evolving this system, but believe I keep improving it yearly. Everyone must define success their way. Region and State Jazz allows for Marked Improvement/Progress to be reflected and everyone benefits, so you win in the long run if it is part of your curriculum.

7. Rehearsal on Big Band Tunes with 3 focus points:

- Very wide Basie dynamics
 - a. The Count Basie Orchestra is famous for its exciting and wide (and often unpredictable) dynamics on its recordings and live performance (What a TREAT that is!).
 - b. We will try to imitate this on all of the demo charts below.
 - i. To help teach this, I use my **hands and voice** to show the different wideness and variety of exciting dynamic ranges possible. Students participate in how they want to use effective dynamics by singing or having the lead trumpet (or a player doing an exceptional job) model.
- Confidence in open improvised solo sections, solis, and written parts to be played *with personality* and improvised slightly
 - a. **Building Confident Improvisors** means looking for ways to **strengthen a player's strengths** and build from there, plugging in the weaknesses. We have to know what they are fully capable of! Whatever sound in our head that we want them to have—***we have to show them we believe in them getting to the sound and solo level.***

- b. I am careful with my rock tune selection. But this one is fantastic. It's a Blues and really fun to play, and there aren't too many difficult sections (the Shout is a little difficult). It has a great written solo for reference in the Trombone solo part, great backgrounds, and a 4 bar drum solo after the shout to get the band back to the melody out.
 - c. We put our own spin on this tune based on recordings of Paschal playing it back in the 1960s. One section is swing, for example. Other sections are articulated very staccato, while others are legato and almost as if the band talked together that year and decided/agreed upon what to do to change it up and make it more exciting.
 - i. Our version offers the 3 Focus points.
 - ii. When we open up solos, we have created our own backgrounds (an excellent teaching tool-learn lots of blues backgrounds and also make/decide them together as a full band unit).
 - iii. You can open up the drum solo! They count it in or you as the director watch and then count in the melody out at the appropriate time.
 - f. *Easy Money* by Benny Carter
 - a. This teaches Count Basie and is not overly difficult. But it is! It teaches many, many things. I will be utilizing the 3 Focus Points to **build confidence** in the band and open it up for some solos. Not a blues—so a great opportunity to help the band learn the harmony and form of the tune. A lot of great things here!
8. Final Q & A will offer you as an audience member the time to clarify anything from the clinic or ask a question of which we can all benefit! Hope you enjoyed this immersive clinic. In conclusion, last year's Paschal Jazz Ensemble will perform Duke Ellington's arrangement of *The Sheik of Araby*, which will continue to demonstrate that over the long haul, ALL STUDENTS CAN LEARN and be bit by the jazz bug. This tune has become a staple of our program and culture. We even add a group vocal (everyone learned the words) and we open up the solo section. We also took an idea from this version: [The Sheik Of Araby - YouTube](#) where all the saxophones and woodwinds learned the Johnny Hodges solo! It is not easy, but has been a very rewarding aspect of our program to all together learn something and then perform it. TO CONCLUDE:

"The reward for playing jazz is playing jazz."—John Lewis

Matthew.sawyer@fwisd.org REACH OUT ANYTIME! Also, mattsawyermusic@gmail.com I look forward to being of help to you if I can. Thank you for coming today!