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Rehearsal Techniques for the Jazz Orchestra: Fundamentals

by Gordon Foote

What exactly is meant by the concept of *fundamentals*? If you look at it in the context of performing music on an instrument, it means the ability to produce a full, in tune, characteristic sound, while having the ability to manipulate pitches with dexterity and flexibility (including articulations). Pitches in motion create melody. You manipulate the sound, add a few characteristic articulations and you are producing melodies. This sounds quite basic, but a majority of junior and senior high school students have underdeveloped sounds, and limited instrumental technique. These limitations inhibit the quality of the musical product. It also takes much longer to have a piece prepared to performance standard.

It should also be kept in mind that fundamentals apply to any style of music, and any age level and type of ensemble. Fundamentals or the basics of music equal the lowest common denominator.

It comes down to basic teaching. At the beginning of rehearsal you spend time working on sound, intonation, sight reading, dynamics, articulation, and technique in several keys. This routine continues for the first few weeks, and then the following scenario hits: "concert in 3 weeks, festival in 5 weeks.....I have to get those tunes sounding better!!!" You stop teaching and start beating notes. The students stop learning so those tunes will sound better. You no longer spend the time on fundamentals. This probably sounds all too familiar. You are caught in the situation where you want the band to sound good, and therefore you sacrifice the teaching of musical skills in order to make the festival set sound great. The only development of fundamentals now comes as a direct result of what is necessary to perform the tunes in the festival set.

The pressures of time management are everywhere, and in every situation. When looking at this logically, not worrying so much about the festival set, it becomes clear that if students have control of sound, have skills in twelve keys, and know how to sight read, the ensemble will sound better with less rehearsal time simply because of those skills. When time is invested at the beginning of each rehearsal to develop basic skills, it will pay big dividends by giving you an ensemble which has the potential to perform more challenging music, with less rehearsal time. You have the choice, fundamentals, or three tunes a year.

Everything dealing with the basics can more or less be divided into two categories: **Sound and Time**. Think of every aspect of performing music: intonation, technique, articulation, range, dynamic control etc. They fall into one of the two categories.

If we think about playing musically, or true to style, it becomes a challenge of manipulating time and sound to create that elusive element known as musicality.

Let's get down to it, what are the fundamentals, and how should they be developed? Before continuing, it should be made clear, that this discussion does not exclude any instrument, or level of development. The students may have been playing six months, or ten years. Metronome markings may be faster for more developed players, but the content is the same.

Why should it be so out of the question to think that people who have been playing for one year should be able to play twelve major scales, major and minor triads around the cycle, or a two octave chromatic scale? It should be common place. Unfortunately, it is very rare to see that happening. In fact, most young players don't even know that there are twelve major keys.

The hard sell is getting over that hump to truly believing that it will pay off in the end! It can't be abandoned after three weeks, in favour of learning a limited amount of repertoire.

A very important point to make here, is to simply get back to using our ears! For some unfortunate reason, learning to play an instrument has become a process of matching black dots on the page to the proper fingering. The ears are somehow bypassed in the process of making music. An interesting experiment, is to ask one of your students to play a simple melody by ear. Take Twinkle Twinkle Little Star, or any other simple melody. See how long it takes before the melody is correct. Next, repeat the exercise but start on a different note. It is very likely that this process takes a great deal of trial and error. The end result has the student using his/her ears to play the instrument, and not the eyes. In the school system, we have lost the concept of playing by ear. To create music you need brain, ear, and finger coordination, not eyes. One only has to think of some of the greatest blind jazz musicians to realize that eyes are totally unnecessary.

So why have eyes become so important in school music, probably because it is faster to teach from a method book. Method books are naturally very important, but of equal importance in becoming a well rounded musician, is the developing the ability to sight read. The one thing which has to be incorporated is the use of the ears.

At the beginning of every rehearsal, religiously set aside 10 minutes for the development of fundamentals. Use brain and ears....that means no eyes. In other words you don't need any type of method book. Warm up with various long sounds at *mf*. Take scales and play whole notes on each degree. Work on low range, high range at various dynamic levels. From the repertoire in your book, find lush rich chords. Isolate them and use them as a sound exercise. This can also turn into a theory class. For example the chord may have a #11, a #9, a sus, or a major 7 next to the root. Young students are not familiar with these sounds and therefore shy away from them. In actual fact the opposite has to happen. Take the example of the major 7 next to the root. That creates a half step clash between the two notes, not a pretty sound by itself, but combined with the full chord it is a marvelous sound.

We learn basically by imitation. There has to be an example of sound for the students to try and emulate. If they have never heard what a well developed sound is, how can they reproduce it? If you have invited a professional player to your school, it is very interesting to watch the reactions of the students when they hear a mature sound for the first time.

Concentrate on opening up the ears. Have they experienced a live sound right in front of them? Do they know the differences between sounds? Can they hear the difference between a thin sound and a rich, dark full sound? How many times have you heard those horrible trombone sounds, or those wimpy saxes? There is simply no energy (air) going through the instrument.

One of the best learning experiences is to have your ensemble sit in with a high quality group. They hear, see and feel the power, the subtly, the musicality, the energy. Can your students play through the twelve major scales? When they always start on B flat, they become engrained in the muscle memory in the hands and brain, more or less second nature. When it is repeated often enough, it no longer requires any thought to play it. Try going up a half step to B major, or around the cycle to E flat. What are the results?

Arrangements have melodies in all keys and in all ranges, speeds, styles, articulations and volumes. In order to play these, you need to have first practiced all of the scales in all ranges, speeds, styles, articulation and volumes.

Do this all by ear, books only confuse the issue, and the ears aren't doing any work. Make the learning of fundamentals an ear to finger coordination exercise and leave the eyes out of the process.

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Rehearsal Techniques for the Jazz Orchestra: Warm-Up

by Gordon Foote

The warm-up should be seen as the time where some of the best teaching takes place. After all, that is where fundamentals will grow and develop. If the warm-up is handled properly, and given the respect and position it deserves, not only will some great teaching take place, but it will set up the attitude for the rest of the rehearsal. Often the warm-up consists of playing a B flat major scale up and down in whole notes. The real purpose of that exercise is to get everybody seated, and settled. There is little or no musical value associated with that activity. The next step is to go right into the first piece, and work out the notes and rhythms.

What is the warm-up really meant to do? Obviously it is meant to prepare the group mentally and physically for the rehearsal and to get students focussing. Optimize this time and get the best teaching done here. Develop the tools.

The warm-up should develop ears, sound, intonation, technique, major and minor keys, range, articulation. It should also instill a strong work ethic, and an attitude which is positive and ready to work. The warm-up should have a standard format, but the exercises within the warm-up should be varied. Try not to do the same thing twice. That sounds like a contradiction, but what it means is that each day the group will do a warm-up, but the content will be constantly changing.

This is the time to challenge the students. New keys, patterns, faster tempos, brighter sound, darker sound, expanded dynamic range, intonation, range. This time should be a mental, physical, and aural work out for all involved. It is up to you to know what you are going to do, and how you are going to proceed. The pace of this segment of the rehearsal should be extremely fast, with no more than a few seconds between exercises for explanation. There should be no time for minds to wander. Rapid fire is what comes to mind.

One way to teach during the warm-up session is for you to play the example for the class, and have them respond. Start with just a single note, and play it in various rhythms. Depending on the level of the class, this can be done with simple clapping, although it is preferable to do it on the instrument. Play a one bar pattern and then have the students repeat it. Start with simple rhythms, and then continue into the area

of syncopations. Don't forget to use long notes, short notes and rests. The more skilled the students become, the longer and more complex the rhythms can be. This will develop both articulation and rhythm skills.

You may have noticed that many students have trouble when it comes to playing subtleties in rhythms. They haven't developed the ability to place a note a little bit earlier, or a little later. Placement of notes is obviously very important when you try to play any kind of music, but even more important when you have to attain the relaxed feeling of swing, or the energy of Latin music. Since most people have an innate sense of rhythm, try tapping into it and develop it. Rhythms which normally cause the most problems are syncopations.

Following rhythmic development, move to the area of melody. Start with very simple two and three note melodies. Move it to other keys. Play the first five notes of a major scale, repeat it in other keys. Change it to the first five notes of a minor scale. Speed up the tempo. Play the whole scale, play it in thirds, play the arpeggios, major, minor, augmented, diminished. Come up with as many variations as possible.

When doing this by ear, the process will be slow. The students will not have developed the ear-finger coordination needed. For results to show, you have to stick with the process. At first it will be frustrating for you and the students, but the results will be the reward. Don't drop it after a few frustrating attempts. In any kind of learning, if you aren't getting frustrated, you aren't learning.

Give very clear assignments, not just such things as "you have to learn all your keys". When it comes to learning technique it is very easy to set out complete assignments. Examples might be something like: play the root notes of the cycle in one breath (C F Bb Eb Ab Db Gb B E A D G) or play all the major triads around the cycle in one breath, or play the first five notes of each major scale in eighth notes, up and down, with a metronome marking of quarter note equals 100. You can design all sorts of exercises, but make sure they have very clearly set out guidelines so the students know when they have successfully completed the assignment.

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Rehearsal Techniques for the Jazz Orchestra: Time

by Gordon Foote

Music from orchestral literature to standard jazz requires all performers to be able to produce sounds with accurate time placement. When you have many people playing a piece of music, a major prerequisite, is that everyone is in the same place at the same time. That seems like a fairly logical and simple concept. The question is, just how exact does one have to be, and at what level does time become clean and accurate, versus time that would be considered sloppy?

If students have an idea of how to visualize time, as with anything else, they are very likely going to execute the procedure with a higher degree of precision.

Time is rather intangible, we can't see, touch or smell it, but we can certainly feel it in a non-tactile sense. We know when it feels right, and when it feels wrong, but we often have trouble explaining to players what is required when the time doesn't feel good.

Here are a few exercises and visualizations to improve time and accuracy.

Start a metronome where the quarter note = 100. Try clapping exactly with it. Precise execution is the goal, basically mask the sound of the metronome. When this has been achieved, try clapping slightly ahead of the click. As you clap ahead of the beat, you don't actually speed up, you are merely anticipating the beat by a fraction of a second. The general feeling should be one of being light and energetic. If you start anticipating the beat more and more, it will go from that feeling of energy, to a feeling of being edgy and rushing. What is actually happening is a physical response to a mental concept. You are manipulating the time. Although the metronome has not changed the tempo, the feel of the time has changed.

With the metronome still at 100 beats per minute, try clapping a fraction of a second behind the beat. As you move further behind the beat it goes from a feeling of slightly dragging, to a feeling of being completely lethargic.

With your bass player and drummer playing together, have one of them act as the metronome, and the other to play slightly ahead or behind the beat. Then reverse the

roles. Each version has a slightly different feel to it. If the drummer and bass player are capable of manipulating the time as such, they will be much more flexible when it comes to playing together. They will also be able to hear when they are ahead or behind, because they are able to simulate the various situations.

This concept also works for horn players. Try playing slightly ahead or behind the beat. Isolate and focus on the concept of time placement.

Another very interesting way of conceptualizing time is to have the metronome clicking at about 72 beats per minute. Those clicks are now going to be half notes. Think of each click as beats one and three. Now reverse it in your mind so that the clicks are beats two and four. These clicks on beats two and four would simulate what happens with the hi-hat. One of the results is that your brain has to be able to manipulate the time in your head. The metronome has not changed it is still clicking at 72 beats per minute, but the concept feels totally different with it on one and three, versus two and four.

Try moving the tempo up and down. As you move it down you need more points of reference to make it easier to find the beats. In other words sub-divide the beats into duples and triples. If you put the metronome at the slowest setting and try clapping exactly with the beat, odds are that it will be several beats before you hit exactly with the click, and even longer before you can hit four clicks in a row with precision. If you sub-divide sixteenths or triplets with the metronome, you will start to be much more accurate. When tempo is faster it becomes impossible to sub-divide as much. You already have more points of reference because of the tempo. In fact, the faster you go, the fewer actual beats you should think. For example with quarter notes at 60, you need to sub-divide (either triplets if it is a swing feel, or straight eighths if it is latin or rock) and think all four quarters. By the time you are at quarter note =320, you can't possibly be thinking sub-divisions.

When we play swing music we think two and four (what the hi-hat is doing). It also feels better clapping on two and four, rather than one and three. When the tempo picks up, you need to switch from thinking two and four, and go to thinking one and three. When the tempo really gets cooking, you need to think even fewer beats per bar, and go to one beat per bar. When a band is playing a medium up, to fast tempo swing tune, if everyone is thinking on two and four, it starts to feel jumpy and edgy. Try having everybody think one beat to the bar, it will probably feel much more relaxed. It makes the beat feel much larger, and therefore it becomes easier to control. It is easier to control one long beat as opposed to four fast ones.

Time has various layers happening at the same time. Try the routine of tapping quarter note triplets in one hand and quarter notes with the other. Feel the 2 against 3. Concentrate on the triplet side, and then on the duple side. Feel how they mesh. Try the same with the concept of 3 against 4.

A conceptualization for students works with the visualization on peg-board, or a cribbage board. Each hole on the board represents a quarter note. Notice how each hole is spaced equidistant from the next hole. The holes don't bunch together or stretch apart, the space between them is equal.

Another visualization is to think of a row of several fishing lines hanging from the ceiling. Each line has a weight on the end. The lines are attached to the ceiling and are absolutely evenly spaced. Each line represents a quarter note. As you get to the next line, you get to the next beat. The faster you move through the lines the sooner you get to the next one, therefore the tempo is faster. If you move at an even speed, you will get to quarter notes at exact beats. It is the concept of moving through the lines at a very even pace.

Have your students clap a quarter note on beat one. Try to do this for several bars in a row. The normal situation is that the first few claps are very uneven. Talk about subdividing the time into triplets and see how the accuracy improves. Most bands anticipate notes that are written on the beat. The most common situation is to anticipate beat one. If you listen to your ensemble you will most likely hear uneven placement on the major beats. It becomes something of a flam effect.

Having done some research in the realm of time and swing concept, it becomes very clear to hear the problems as they exist in young bands. It only stands to reason, that if a group of people can't clap together on four quarter notes, that with the added complexities of playing an instrument, they won't be capable of playing four quarter notes together.

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Rehearsal Techniques for the Jazz Orchestra: Articulation

by Gordon Foote

One of the major aspects needed for an ensemble to sound tight, clean, powerful, and full of energy, is that of accurate execution of articulations. Many young ensembles don't pay enough attention to making the proper articulation. It would be similar to trying to talk without a tongue, you would hear what is being said, but you would need to listen very carefully to understand.

It isn't that young ensembles are incapable of producing good articulations, it is simply that they are not quite sure how they should sound, and how to physically produce them. When they have the fundamental of producing the various articulations, the ensemble will sound considerably better.

Each note has three basic components: beginning, middle and end. Students are used to paying attention to the beginning, but usually are not concerned about what happens after that. The start of the note is obviously important because of where it has to be placed in time. The middle and end are the components which help to bring out musicality and tight and clean performance.

If we look at the beginning of a note, there are really only two ways to get it started. It is either started abruptly as in an accent (in other words, from silence to sound instantly), or a more relaxed version of silence to sound, as if you played a taper backwards. (Huh!?). Try saying the word "who" or "how" softly and slowly. The beginning of the word is soft. It doesn't explode as if you said the word "car" or "king" in a loud percussive manner. The percussive accent might look like one end of a rectangle, in other words, a vertical straight edge, the "who" sound might look more like the beginning of an ellipse.

In the following illustrations, think of time flowing past the illustrations from left to right. As time hits the shape, sound begins. It is either abrupt, or gradual.



As time flows by those lines from left to right, sound starts. If you think of time flowing by those lines at an even rate, and sound starts at each line, you would have even time. As the time passes each line it is the beginning of another beat. When they are equidistant, and lined up with what could be the "click" of the metronome, it would be perceived as "in time" or "on time", with an abrupt beginning to the sound. The above sound has no length, and might be heard as a click. Let's look at a sound which has an abrupt beginning (as in the above illustration) and an abrupt end, with very little middle.



The above would simply be four staccato quarter notes. There is an abrupt start to the note, a very short middle and then an abrupt finish to the sound. There should be, as depicted by the illustration, more silence than sound. It should be complete silence between the sounds. If you think of the syllable "dit", you will notice that when it is said in a percussive manner, it has the potential to be an aggressive type of articulation. Work with the students first singing the syllable and then performing it on their instruments. One way to work on this particular articulation is to say the syllable very slowly (perhaps quarter note = 60). Say it percussively and at the same time, exactly in time. If there is trouble getting the quarters together, start by clapping them, and also subdividing the time. Try the sub-divisions three different ways: even eighths, eighth note triplet (for swing feel) and sixteenths. Speed the metronome up and work for accuracy at faster tempos.

If the middle of the note was lengthened, but maintained the same beginning and end, the note might sound more like a "dot" or "daht". This particular sound still has silence between the notes, just more meat to the middle of the sound. This type of articulation is very common in jazz, and is depicted by the "cap" or "^" over the note head. Make sure to emphasize the "t" sound on the end of the note. Most often this note starts to sound like "dah" (more of a tapered end) because the "t" is not strong enough. Students are not used to this sound, most likely because it more or less requires two articulations for each note, one to start the note, and one to stop it. Remember, it is simply a staccato note with more middle. It might look like this:



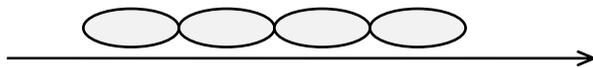
The notes should literally sound like blocks of sound. The slower the tempo the longer the sound lasts, but is still relative to the above illustration.

If the legato sound was required it would simply be constant sound with slight interruptions in the flow. The syllable "duuduuduudu" or "dooodooodooodoo" might best depict the sound.



Notice that there constant sound with a slight articulation to add time to the sound. If the sound had no articulation it would be a whole note. What we have here are legato quarter notes.

In ballad playing a tapered sound is often required.



In the above, you can see a sound which has a softer rounder beginning. It does not have a either an abrupt beginning or end. Perhaps it would be more like a "haah" or even the earlier mentioned "who" syllable. This articulation is often very difficult for young players because it requires a great deal of instrumental sound control. To be capable of having a sound start out of nowhere, expand through the middle, and then taper to a smooth end, is something even more advanced players have trouble accomplishing. Having said that, it is much more likely that young players will be able to execute this type of articulation if they have a graphic depiction.

The taper on the beginning and end of the above notes could be larger or smaller. There might even be a slight separation in the sounds (silence between notes). The fade on the end of the note might be extremely long if for example it was the end of a whole note, or the final pause of the piece.

So far we have looked at notes with abrupt beginnings and endings, and notes with tapered beginnings and endings. What happens when we combine an abrupt beginning with a tapered end.



The middle of the sound (note) has the option of starting soft and getting loud, starting loud and getting soft, starting soft getting loud and then getting soft again (and vice versa). By mixing and matching the various beginnings, middles and ends, the end results are notes which have every possible length and shape. These lengths and shapes are the tools of sound required for making musical lines.

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Rehearsal Techniques for the Jazz Orchestra: Swing Harder by Gordon Foote

There are many common problems that are heard every year in concerts, festivals and workshops. With this in mind, the following is a list of easily implemented suggestions to help your band swing harder and play more accurately.

1. **LISTEN TO THE MUSIC!** Your students are playing a language of music, with various jazz dialects (swing, rock, latin etc.). They have to hear examples of what it is they are trying to imitate. Make sure to listen often, and in depth. It has to be a very active type of listening. Have music playing before rehearsal and use recorded examples during rehearsals and if possible get recordings into the hands of your students of the actual arrangements you are learning. Have them play their parts along with the recording.
2. **DON'T RUSH!!** The most common mistake, and the most common phrase used on adjudication tapes. Understand the first and most basic concept of swing, every note that is written on the beat, is to be played directly on the beat. That applies to every instrument from the lead trumpet down to the bass. Every single note on the beat, from every single instrument has to be executed precisely together, and exactly on the beat. Do not rush or drag, but match the metronome exactly. Listen especially for beat one. It is guaranteed that beat one will be rushed. Clap the rhythms to verify and demonstrate accuracy.
3. The **laid back feeling of swing** does not come from playing behind the beat. If you look at number two above, you will see that notes on the beat are directly on the beat. They are not laid back. The laid back feeling comes from the "and" of the beat, and just how far back it should be placed. No matter how far back you put the "and" of the beat, the following note "on the beat", has to be exactly that, "on the beat".
4. There are two types of placements for the "and" of the beat. One which is the normal two-thirds, one-third relationship (swing eighth notes), and the other which is in large part unknown, but truly responsible for the "laid back feeling". Simply put, anytime you have a note on the "and" of a beat, which is followed by a rest (or is

tied over), in other words there is no rush to play another note after the "and" of the beat has been played, that note will be laid back further than two-thirds, one-third. It will now be placed in the position of the last sixteenth of the beat. By playing notes in that particular situation, slightly later, the band starts to swing harder.

5. Look for accuracy in all aspects of rehearsal. Break things down to the lowest common denominator, and **isolate** the problem at hand. In order to illustrate and diagnose the problem utilize the system **clap, sing, play**. Each of these steps demonstrates a particular aspect of performance. **Clap**, illustrates where the ensemble is exactly together, and where there is room for improvement in rhythmic accuracy. **Sing**, illustrates lengths, shapes, energy, forward motion and style of notes and phrases. **Play**, brings the basic elements of the two previous steps together.
6. For swing to happen, the foundation must be solid. **Bass** players need to play notes much longer, more connected, and accurately in time (exactly with the click of the metronome). Notes still need accent and point to them, but they cannot be chopped. Separated bass notes make the swing feel bounce. Electric bass players need to think of imitating an acoustic bass sound, and attack. In order for this to happen, they have to hear what they are trying to imitate. Play along with Basie recordings. For bass players in swing music, it's all about quarter notes!
7. **Drummers** need to think of a couple of basics, the first of which is: keep it simple. Since the drumset is a foreign instrument to most directors, it is rather intimidating. The common reaction is to control the drummer, and keep telling him/her that it is too loud. The drummer is like the captain of an aircraft, everyone may be on board and ready to go, but without the captain, the engines don't even get started. Drummers, take charge of the band, you have to fly the plane! The basis of swing time for drummers is the quarter note on the ride cymbal, locked up with the "chick" on the hi-hat on two and four. If you get a good sound out of the ride cymbal (straight and even quarters), combined with a strong, solid, full and even "chick" on the hi-hat, that should swing by itself. Make sure the hi-hat and ride cymbal hit exactly together on every beat two and four. If you play bass drum on all four beats (known as feathering the bass drum), it has to be very soft. Try staying away from the bass drum as a time keeper, let the bass take care of quarter notes on all four beats.

8. **Articulation** in the horns is a major weakness in trying to develop swing phrasing and style. Very few young bands know how to articulate properly, and it shows in the music. The most common place to hear this is in horn soli sections. They wiggle the fingers but don't articulate anything. The opposite or over articulating is also a problem. This is where series of consecutive eighth notes are bounced. This starts to sound like the Mickey Mouse Club Band. The notes must be connected but still articulated. This is a very legato tongue that some people call bebop tonguing. The proper use of articulations will really help in producing a good swing concept.
9. When thinking of **dynamics** think of large and small areas. The large section dynamics would be where the music is marked **ff** or **mp** etc. Try to expand the dynamic range where the softs are much softer, and the louds are much louder. That point is obvious, but unless the director insists on expanded dynamic range consistently, **mf** will be the basic volume from beginning to end. The second type of dynamic could be thought of as embedded, where there are a certain notes which need to be louder, and ones that need to be almost non-existent. Articulations that are **accented** need to be accented harder, notes that are **ghosted** need to be softer. When you play **ff** it needs to be louder, and conversely when you play **pp** it needs to be softer. Don't fall into the compressed dynamic range of **mf** to **f**. Insist on dynamic contrasts. A good exercise is to take a chord and play it at what you think is a normal **f** volume. Rather than deal with the traditional dynamic markings, try using numbers, such as you would find on a stereo (1 through 10). Students will much more easily relate to a variation of volume level 2 to 6, as opposed to **mp** to **f**. Ask them to perform the chord at level 5 and then just show fewer or more fingers to indicate louder or softer volumes. You will find that they have to work very hard to get the volume variations. It is your job to make sure that the dynamic range is not compressed. It takes so much less energy to play at **mf**, but the music loses so much life.
10. Focus your attention on the concept that every note has a beginning, a middle and an end. If you are only concerned about the beginning of the note, it means that only one third of the package is receiving attention. Carry the process through to the end. Be concerned with when, how and where notes are started, but don't forget to also focus on the length and shape of the middle, and also on how and when it should be ended.
11. Most often notes and lines sound like a translation of dots from the page. Really start to hear the lines, and be flexible with the way they can be played. Shape notes, both dynamically and in pitch. Listen to what your voice does when you explain something. It will have dynamic range, where important words are emphasized and

words that are not so important are negated. It is the same with music lines. Find the notes that have importance and emphasize them. These will give lines a much more human and musical quality. Again **listen, listen, listen**.

12. Piano, in medium and fast tempo swing, stay away from the pedal. The pedal will blur rhythmic punch, and detract from energy. Remember that you are a percussion instrument. Too much pedal will also "flood" the sound, making voicings and harmonies muddy and mushy. In ballads the pedal can be used for sustaining and connecting chords.
13. Think of the ensemble as actors. When you mount a stage production everything is exaggerated, from the make-up, to the way the lines are delivered. Do the same with all aspects of music, from articulations, to dynamics. Most often in rehearsal the various aspects of performance are compressed. Remove the compression, and don't let the ensemble get lazy. Short needs to be short, loud needs to be loud, soft needs to be soft, notes need to be placed exactly where they belong and with everyone in the band doing it the same way.
14. Insist on all of these elements. It is your job to make them happen. Do not accept mediocrity. All students are capable of excellence, if excellence is nurtured and expected.
15. **Directors**, stand back and really listen to the ensemble. Very often directors don't really hear how the ensemble sounds because they are caught up with the actual conducting. It becomes impossible to hear the group objectively. Develop the ability to dissociate yourself from the group, and honestly evaluate the performance as if you were hearing it for the first time. This is very difficult, and takes discipline, but will prove to be an eye opener, helping you to truly isolate problems and to further improve the group.
16. Keep the concept of **forward motion** and **energy** in mind. Music has to have energy and direction in order to live. Understand what factors enhance, and which destroy the feeling of energy. Dynamics, articulations, accents/ghosts, note/time placement, sound quality, balance and intonation, are all key factors which will directly impact the feeling of forward motion and energy. It is common to think that energy comes strictly from volume. The Basie band has incredible energy while playing at *pp*. Find the contrasts in the lines and make sure they happen.

- The setting of clear rules and guidelines for the group
- Setting the atmosphere and tone of the rehearsal
- Making the expectations and responsibilities clear
- Creating attainable challenges
- Developing a positive group spirit
- Instilling a sense of commitment, dedication and pride
- Convincing the administration to support the program
- Convincing the parents to support the program
- Creating a reputation for the organization

Requirements and obligations of the leader:

- Consistency in determination, expectation, drive
- The ability to truly and honestly evaluate your talents, strengths and weaknesses
- The ability to honestly evaluate and emphasize those strengths and minimize the weaknesses
- The ability to effectively solve problems
- The ability to effectively understand and deal with the varied personalities in your ensembles
- The ability to mold the various personalities, skills and talents into a single cohesive unit
- The ability and worthiness of gaining the respect of the ensemble
- To have high expectations of your students, and even higher expectations of yourself.
- Superior rehearsal skills and techniques
- Solid and valid concepts of time, sound, style, phrasing, articulation, balance, blend, intonation and the skills to develop them in your students.
- In depth knowledge of various aspects of the subject (in jazz this could range from improvisation, theory, arranging/composition, to understanding rhythm sections and styles)

Personality of leader:

- Reliable, dependable, flexible, approachable
- Fair and consistent
- Trustworthy
- Enthusiastic, energetic and hard working

- Committed and dedicated
- Knowledgeable
- Charismatic
- Passionate about the music, the students and the ensemble
- Strong and powerful positive attitude
- Able to inspire and motivate students
- Will not accept lazy or uncooperative attitudes
- Respect for students, and the music (which is hopefully returned in kind by the students)
- Knows why he/she is teaching, and those are the right reasons (i.e. Not for the money, or because it is a job)

Each individual is just that, an individual. Each leader, director, teacher has his/her own methods for dealing with the day to day routines of students, colleagues, and the process of teaching. Over the years, with added experience, we all hopefully do things a little bit better and are a little more effective and efficient. As teachers are observed over the years, they tend to use less physical energy, but at the same time, the musical product is of higher quality. This might be called working smarter, not harder. Running an efficient operation is the goal, experience is the key.

There are those teachers who go about building a program simply with the combination of determination, desire, hard work and energy, but with limited musical or directing skills. Others go about it perhaps in a more intellectual way or perhaps in a strictly musical way. The results are what count. What have the students learned, and how does the ensemble sound. It is also important to of what kind of musical experience you are giving the students.

Think in broad terms. How profound is the impact of participating in this ensemble on the rest of their lives? What is the impact on the students who have participated in your ensembles? How will it influence how your students think, work, concentrate, focus, react and evaluate throughout the rest of their lives?

It is very important to assess the reasons why you decided to go into teaching music, and to periodically reassess your level of commitment, and re-evaluate your reasons. Which of the following most closely identify you?

- It's a job, and there are bills to pay
- You have put in several years, and now you are coasting
- You feel you have something to offer (whether you are teaching in the first or fortieth year)

- You feel that you can make a difference
- You enjoy working with young people
- You are passionate about the music and really want to share your knowledge
- You want to build your reputation
- You want to build the reputation of your school

The feeder system

A great way to develop a top notch ensemble is to have a solid foundation through a feeder system. This could be a strong middle school that feeds into a high school, or having ranked ensembles that feed into the top group. It is a matter of developing and grooming the younger or less experienced players for the higher level groups. Every fall there is a turnover of students, and if you have to start from scratch each time, it is a little like running on the spot, there aren't people to fill in when the holes are left when the previous students graduate. If you have groups which feed into the top group, you will not only realize the benefits of having people ready to jump into the openings left by graduating students, but there will also be some incentive for the members of the lower bands to climb to the upper bands. The members of the top group will also realize that their positions aren't necessarily secure. This will keep the standards high, and everyone on their toes. It also helps to preserve the tradition that you have developed.

This does tend to become a bit of a balancing act. You want the group to feel like a group, with its members feeling secure that they will remain in the top group. At the same time, there has to be a little bit of insecurity and doubt, so they don't become complacent. The amount of insecurity has to be minimal, but it still needs to be there. There has to be a little bit of an edge. This goes back to the point of always changing things up. Different tunes, different order, new soloists on the spot, changing backgrounds. That is how things keep growing, maturing and evolving. The bottom line is that the music has more snap to it, more life and energy. It becomes more vibrant.

Those in the top band should realize that they have to keep producing and improving, or they might be replaced. This should be set up as a very formalized challenge procedure, which is understood by all involved. One method is to have an open challenge system where anyone may challenge for a spot in a higher group at anytime. The process should be explained as to how the challenge will be executed, the requirements, and how the final decision will be made. This must be a very clearly defined process.

Another type of challenge system might be one where challenges are permitted only at specified times of the year. This could be at mid-semester, semester break, or any

Rehearsal Techniques for the Jazz Orchestra: Psychology by Gordon Foote

other convenient time. The challenge procedure would remain the same, with the only difference is when challenges would be allowed.

The actual challenge could be anything you feel will show the differences between the two players. Depending of what qualities you are looking for, soloist, sight reader, styles, range, sound, intonation, balance and blend, you could set the challenge material accordingly. One suggestion might be to have one prepared piece, and one for sight reading. It is also a very good idea to have the challenger play in the group to see how it sounds. You also have to weigh the personal side of the issue. Will the challenger be a positive or negative force in the group, what do the other members of the group think, will he/she be accepted by the ensemble. From past experience, replacing a current member of the group with the challenger, can cause friction within the group. This will fade if the challenger is truly a better player, and the group realizes that the exercise was done for the overall betterment.

This section may not apply to many of the programs due to the fact that having several jazz groups is almost impossible, given the various constraints. Those who do have strong feeder systems will very likely say that one of the major reasons for success is due to the fact that the feeder system is in place.

There is no substitute for experience, and no way to get it without doing it! Keep evaluating your methods, goals, direction, skills, abilities, and weaknesses.

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Rehearsal Techniques for the Jazz Orchestra: Rehearsal Time

by Gordon Foote

Most of the job of the director has to be accomplished in rehearsal. Very little actual input is needed during performance and therefore it is for this reason that rehearsal time should be considered sacred, and the students need to regard it as such. The feeling during rehearsals should be warm, welcoming and fun, but everyone involved should have an attitude that is serious, with focus and a sense of urgency. Rehearsal time is always at a premium and the most has to be made of every minute. The attitude the director brings to rehearsal will go a long way in developing that sense of importance and urgency.

It is extremely important to set routines, rehearsal parameters, rules and attitudes at the beginning of the year. Since it is more difficult to tighten up a situation which at first was too relaxed, perhaps it is better to error on the side of seriousness at first. Peer pressure is very important. When things are on track, it will be obvious, as the stronger personalities and more senior members will take care of those who are not contributing, or are detracting from the product. Discipline problems should be very minimal.

All groups, teams, ensembles develop an identity and a personality. The personality that the group develops is an amalgamation of attitudes and personalities of the director and its members. This will change and develop the longer the group stays together, and the better everyone starts to know each other.

Try and develop this ensemble personality early in the year. You will begin to know who will be the most trustworthy, positive and helpful, who you can depend on to help with extra work, and those who might need a little extra attention. Each member is an individual and has something to contribute. It is very important to have the group spend some time together outside of rehearsals, as early in the year as possible. It could be as simple as having pizza, or watching a movie. Watch how the personalities interact, the senior members, the strong characters, the rookies. They will all start to feel like they are a part of the group and will be able to contribute to its overall success. The director's job is to mold the sum of the parts into a single unit, worthy of the energy and time commitment, and something of which to be proud.

The very best way to develop an ensemble personality is to have the short term and long term goals for the year in place. A great goal is to have the group travel. If at all possible, it is suggested that one of the trips be scheduled as early in the year as possible. It doesn't have to be a long trip, nor does it have to be an overnight trip, but just the effect of spending time together, away from home and school, working together as a unit, will go a long way towards building the feeling of unity. One suggestion is to plan a retreat for the group. These usually consist of a weekend outing, with a clinician to teach and rehearse the ensemble. The benefits of such an outing early in the year go far beyond the musical. As we know, we aren't just teaching music, we are preparing students for life. This is a perfect example of developing life preparation skills.

In a university setting, a great ensemble serves as a major recruiting tool for the school. In high school and junior high, it serves to expose students to the art of music. It is important to give them a well rounded experience so they will appreciate and support music for the rest of their lives.

The budding romances, the personality clashes, the friendships, and the rivalry for superiority (the drummer or lead trumpet syndrome) will all start to emerge. The interactions will develop the ensemble personality further.

Routine and schedule must be organized and maintained. Try to have a consistent time for rehearsal. When times get moved around too much, it is very easy to lose the feeling of continuity and forward momentum. We are all creatures of habit, if time and place are set from the beginning, rehearsal times tend to have more significance psychologically, than if they get bounced around from week to week.

Make rehearsal a priority. If it isn't your priority then it definitely won't be a priority for your students.

Some very important rules: be true to your word, be fair to all involved, expect the best effort from everyone, and above all be consistent. When a rehearsal is scheduled for a specific time, expect it to start at that time. Respect the time of your students. Tension is always created when a start time cannot be respected because someone is late. Don't accept that type of behaviour. It is important to have a respected start time for the rehearsal and it is equally important to have an end time that is also respected. Obviously the director has to set the example for what is expected by being on time and prepared. Having established what is expected, let the peer pressure take care of any members who show up late. Everyone will be late at some point, so there needs to be some flexibility, and each situation should be evaluated separately.

One trick which has worked very well over the years has been to assess some type of fine for those students arriving late. The members of the ensemble decide, and enforce what the levy will be. You are considered late as soon as the ensemble starts playing the first tune. Students usually give a late comer some grief. If the students are truly committed to the group, they won't be late. Let the students decide if the fine should be waived or levied.

When people arrive late it could also be a sign of some other types of attitudes. It could be a passive aggressive attitude towards the ensemble, the director or the music. This also shows a lack of respect for fellow ensemble members, the music and the director. This type of behavior can be somewhat contagious, and it is best to deal with it as soon as it is noticed.

The most important element is to establish common goals, and to develop pride in the organization.

There are obviously many different styles when it comes to rehearsing a group. With experience, everyone develops his/her own lines, phrases, methods and style. They run the gamut from very loose and relaxed, to tense and with military precision. Find what works best for the way you think and hear, and what your ensemble gets used to.

The pace of the rehearsal will go a long way in keeping up the interest. Pace should be independent of the style of the director. Loose and relaxed can still have a fast pace of stopping and starting, and conversely, military discipline can move painfully slowly from stop, through explanation and back to playing. Spend as little time talking, and as much time playing as possible. Not only will you have productive rehearsals, but there will be less opportunity for students to start up conversations. Explanations should not take more than 10 to 20 seconds. Try and develop a routine where the band stops playing immediately after you indicate a stop. Give a brief account of the problem, explain how you want them to do it differently, and then try it again. A rapid fire approach keeps people on their toes. The director should be putting out a great deal of energy during rehearsal, and should expect the same from the students.

Any behaviour that is not helping the group should be eliminated. An example of a behaviour that wastes a great deal of time is when you stop the band to fix something, and several students keep playing after the rest of the band has stopped. Do not accept that type of behavior, because it will tend to get worse over time.

During each rehearsal there are several things which must be accomplished: the warm-up, teaching and developing skills, sight reading, preparing and perfecting repertoire,

and some time for announcements. The amount of time spent on each element will change throughout the year. Obviously at the beginning of the year, or after a major concert, much more time will be spent on sight reading. The focus of each rehearsal will change depending on the various external factors. Be flexible, and at the same time, mindful of just what it is you wish to accomplish in each rehearsal. Have a game plan.

The order of the routine should be something like this: the warm-up, then play a tune the band knows, sounds good and is fun to play, next sight read a tune, then get down to rehearsing tunes that really need work and are on the next performance (this section should be allotted the greatest amount of time). The last tune of the rehearsal should be one which is very energetic and fun to play. This will have everyone leaving the rehearsal with a good feeling and lots of energy. It is very important that everyone feels a sense of accomplishment at the end of the rehearsal. It is very demoralizing if everyone feels that it was just a big waste of time.

Pace the rehearsal in terms of brass chops, variety and styles of tunes, tempos, and keys. Occasionally throw in tunes which you don't necessarily intend to perform, but are a real challenge. This can sometimes really get the juices flowing and inspire the group to rise to another level, or it may have the opposite effect of discouraging the ensemble. In either case, it is a very good dose of reality. Sometimes they might need a well placed ego boost, or sometimes the opposite. A well chosen piece to sight read can give the desired result.

Keep reminding yourself and the ensemble, that several aspects of performance are independent. Sound quality, time feel, volume, tempo, style, cut-off, note shape, and articulations are all essential elements, but cannot be allowed to influence the other aspects. They must work together, and at the same time independently. Think of a row of light switches. Each switch controls a basic element. When you turn on the switch for volume, it doesn't affect any other element. We all have seen the effects of trying to change the dynamic. Softer should mean just that, softer. Unfortunately softer usually influences other elements, with the result of softer being slower with longer articulations. The row of light switches gives the students a concept to think about.

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Rehearsal Techniques for the Jazz Orchestra: Performance

by Gordon Foote

One of the goals of learning to play music is to have the chance to demonstrate what you have learned. When a performance is scheduled, it gives everyone a very clear and focused goal, within an obvious time frame. Although the performance isn't the ultimate goal of teaching music, it does serve to motivate and focus many aspects of the rehearsal. Time restrictions with a focused goal, usually make for the best use of rehearsal time. When you feel pushed for time, you usually squeeze the most out of every minute. One way to maintain that feeling is to have strategically placed performances throughout the year. Everyone works better when they have deadlines which keep the pressure on you and the ensemble.

The number of performances is a very important issue. It becomes a bit of a juggling act to schedule enough, but not too many concerts. You should have in mind, a rough estimate of the minimum and maximum number of performances you would like, and as mentioned above, they should be scheduled so that a feeling of direction is maintained. The feeling of forward motion and growth will be lost if you have several performances scheduled in one month, and then nothing for the next three months.

It is also interesting to be working on material for several different types of performances at the same time. One audience might be senior citizens, or a recruiting concert at a junior high, plus a parents concert or a festival set. Some of the material might be useable at several of the events, but there would still have to be a considerable range of repertoire to accommodate all of the performances. That in itself puts positive pressure on you and the ensemble to make the most out of every minute of rehearsal time.

While working on the schedule you should take into account the other types of activities in which your students participate, their work schedules, school work, activities scheduled for the entire school, plus other trips, tournaments, and sports events which may include music students. If you consult with those involved, and you have established good lines of communication, compromises will be worked out to strike a happy balance. The number of performances will depend on you, the students, the parents, and the administration. You can't schedule all of this in a vacuum. Try the approach of the three C's, consultation, communication and compromise.

If you are committed to developing a great jazz program, you will think nothing of having the group perform for any and every occasion. Be careful not to overextend your students, the parents, or yourself. Listen to those around you and keep things in perspective.

When performing a jazz concert, it is customary for the director to also act as the emcee. This includes introducing the selections and soloists. Often some background on the piece is given with perhaps a little information on the soloists, the school and points of interest. After the performance of the tune the soloists should be acknowledged once again. Make sure that those people being acknowledged realize that when their names are called, they should stand and take a bow. At some point during the performance everyone in the ensemble should be introduced (don't just use the first names, use the full name). Introducing the group at one time may take too much time, and might disrupt the flow of the concert. One way to avoid this is to insert the introductions one section at a time, throughout the performance. Another important aspect is the fact that the audience needs to hear what you are saying. Speak clearly (hopefully you will have a sound system) and wait for the applause to stop before speaking (nothing will be understood if you speak over the applause).

As the director, you should try and convey a relaxed atmosphere, showing that the group is there to have fun and enjoy making music, but at the same time is very respectful of the art form. Your comments should be brief and to the point. Have you been to a concert where the director talked more than the ensemble played?

Flow is the key to a good concert. Make sure that the program has a variety styles, tempos, features, soloists and keys. Feature the strengths of the group and also try to hide the weaknesses. Start the performance on time, don't break it up with too much talking between selections, and keep the concert length in mind. People won't turn out for concerts if you have the reputation of producing long winded affairs. Concerts can be any length, but never over two hours. Always leave them wanting more.

The atmosphere should be more relaxed and not as formal in comparison to an orchestral concert. The members of the ensemble should be allowed to look and feel relaxed. This however should not be taken to an extreme. Occasionally jazz ensembles have turned performances into sporting events, with cheers and high five's at the end of each solo. Enthusiasm should be evident, but it shouldn't sound like the winning goal was just scored.

When a member of the ensemble is playing a solo, the other members of the ensemble should be paying attention. It is disrespectful to the music and the soloist to see members of the group engaged in conversation while the soloist is out front playing.

The pacing of a concert should be very important. Vary the styles, intensities, volumes, and keys of the selections. How do you want to open the concert, with a burner, or a more subtle approach such as a medium swinger? How do you want to close the concert, and will there be an encore? Have you covered all of the musical bases.....swing, latin, rock, ballad...with various tempos being covered? Has the order held the interest of the audience, or did you loose them half way through? Did the type of music suit the audience? Will there be an intermission? Will you have a printed program?

Another important element is the uniform. Some ensembles perform in their band uniforms, others in tuxedos and others in a less formal type of attire. Will you allow students to wear hats and sunglasses? Whatever the dress-code keep in mind the meaning of "uniform" and make sure that there is always respect shown for the music and the ensemble.

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Rehearsal Techniques for the Jazz Orchestra: Video and Audio Recording by Gordon Foote

We all have fairly easy access to recording equipment these days. Every school has a video camera, and some sort of audio recording device. These two pieces of technology, if used properly, can really enhance to the teaching and learning experience. If you have never recorded a rehearsal or concert, and if you have never video taped yourself and your ensemble, now is the time to start.

Many directors don't hear how their groups really sound. They also have no idea how they look when directing. It is very easy to get so involved in the performance, that the sense of reality is lost. It will be wonderfully revealing when you record your band, and then sit back, watch and listen to what was recorded. Very often it is quite a shock, "I don't really look like that when I direct!" Video tape doesn't lie. After watching yourself on video, it is very likely that you will make some changes.

Audio tape your rehearsals regularly. Most often it is the music you want to hear, but try letting the tape roll through the rehearsal so you can evaluate your rehearsal techniques. The tape will give you a good idea of how you relate to your students. Many times the perception from the student's point of view is different from what we think we are projecting. You will hear how efficient you are at isolating and repairing problems. You will hear problems that you may have missed during rehearsal, and want to fix next time around. Be organized, follow the score, and take notes as you listen.

When you video tape yourself, look for the types of motions you use, and if they are appropriate. Do they serve a purpose, or are they superfluous. Do the motions fit the music? For example, in a smooth ballad, are the motions jerky, do you conduct too much or not enough, what could you do better? Watch the ends of tunes, are the pauses long enough? One question to ask is simply "could the ensemble continue in this spot without any conducting?" If the answer is yes, then stop conducting, you might be doing more harm than good. If you look at this logically, it is rare to see a professional jazz ensemble with a conductor out front. That should be a very big clue in itself. If they don't have conductors, then what is the importance of a conductor for a high school band? In other words, it is impossible to conduct too little. On the other hand, almost any conducting is too much!

17



Rehearsal Techniques for the Jazz Orchestra: Clinicians

by Gordon Foote

If you find the right clinician for your situation, the benefits to you and your students will far outweigh the costs involved.

Several directors have said that one of the most effective ways for them to learn was to invite a clinician to work with his/her ensembles. It is also a great way for your students to learn. Many times it is the director who gets the most out of a clinic. Don't forget, the director will be able to use the information for the rest of his/her teaching career, which could possibly benefit thousands of students over the years.

If good teaching is happening, the clinician should be reinforcing what the director has been saying. The advantage is to have someone new, say the same things as the regular director, but with different words, and from a different face. This fresh approach helps both the director and the students.

Often directors get very involved with the actual conducting of the ensemble. The sounds and energy are very exciting, making it very easy to get caught up in the action. They jump around using so much energy, and in the process they don't really hear what the ensemble is doing. With a clinician rehearsing the band, the director has the opportunity to sit back, and really hear the group. This can be revealing at times, and often humbling, but in the final analysis, the ensemble will sound much better. In your rehearsals, make sure to take time to stand back, detach yourself from the ensemble, FOCUS and REALLY LISTEN to what is happening. It will reveal many things that would have otherwise gone unnoticed.

When someone else works your ensemble, you can get their perspective on what needs attention, how problems are fixed and their rehearsal pacing. We all have different strengths, and listen for various things, so it is good to invite people from various instrumental areas (a rhythm section player versus a horn player), you will get a broad range of perspectives, and learn some technical information from them at the same time.

When hiring a clinician there are several things to keep in mind. Ask yourself what you want and need to learn. In other words, what are your weaknesses? Go through the various sections and decide what are the gaps in my knowledge, what do I want to learn and what will benefit the ensemble the most? The most common are: knowledge of the various styles, improvisational skills, jazz articulation problems, time problems, and range problems. Not to mention the fundamentals of sound quality, intonation, balance, blend and phrasing.

The prerequisites for hiring a clinician are: he/she must have the skills you are trying to develop in your ensemble, he/she must be capable of demonstrating the various aspects (30 seconds of demonstration is worth 30 minutes of talking), he/she must have broad knowledge in the field, and be able to work and communicate with the students in your program.

The fee charged by clinicians varies greatly. You have to be specific with your request. Many fine players have valuable information to contribute in clinic sessions, however you have to be certain that the individual is able to communicate that information. How often have you heard a comment about someone who is known as a great player, but really doesn't say much of value in a clinic situation? It becomes a very frustrating situation when a highly regarded player is in to clinic your ensemble, and after hearing the group, says something like "that was very good, just keep doing what you are doing". Teaching and performing are both arts, requiring very different kinds of skills and talents.

If you want someone to be a guest soloist with your ensemble then you hire a soloist. If you want someone to teach your ensemble, then you hire a teacher who can also play. It is a very rare combination to have someone who is an excellent teacher, an excellent player, is articulate, and also has the ability to relate to the students.

One of the best ways of finding people to clinic your ensembles is simply word of mouth. The scene is not really that big, and therefore the number of good clinicians is limited. Naturally you will be limited by budget, so try to find people relatively close to you. In the larger centers it might even be possible to find someone at your own back door. Travel and hotel costs are minimized. You might also be able to take advantage of graduates of your program.

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Rehearsal Techniques for the Jazz Orchestra: Sectionals

by Gordon Foote

One of the most obvious places to dramatically improve your ensembles is during the sectional rehearsal. The most common types of sectionals are where like instruments get together to rehearse trouble spots. Within the jazz ensemble, it is usually broken into four sections: saxes, trumpets, trombones, and rhythm section. This does not necessarily have to be the only format. Depending on the work that needs to be done, the group could be larger or smaller. For example, it is not uncommon to combine the trumpets and trombones into a brass sectional, or to have just the bass and piano together for a rehearsal. Since the baritone sax and bass trombone often have similar lines, it might be a good idea to invite the bari player to the trombone sectional. The point is to check out the music, know what areas need work and then tailor the instruments to fit the situation.

Who should run the sectional? Since one of the goals of the sectional rehearsal is to develop the section so it works together as a unit, it is often a good idea to charge them with the responsibility of running the rehearsal. This may be a hit and miss proposition, depending on the strengths of the individual section leaders. Ideally it would be best if section leaders took charge of scheduling rehearsals, and running the actual sectional. As we know, this isn't always possible for a variety of reasons. It might be good if at first you ran the sectional, giving them an idea of how it should be organized, and then from time to time give them the opportunity to try it on their own.

We cannot separate the human or personal side of things from the music. These students are teenagers, with all of the insecurities, fears and worries which accompany that chaotic age. If we remember that we are not just teaching music, but developing people, then the situation of having a small group of people working together as a unit to create a product, turns into a great life lesson. They have to work together, and in order for that to happen, they have to get to know each other.

Usually if students are given the opportunity to assume responsibility, they will try very hard to live up to the expectations. In the case of leading a section, one of those responsibilities happens to be musical, but another one involves developing interpersonal relationships.

The beauty of sectional rehearsals is that if properly organized and run, a great deal of pinpoint rehearsing can be accomplished. Where the saxes have a passage that looks like chicken scratch, the brass may have rests. The brass sit there doing very little, while the saxes are sweating it out. With rehearsal time at such a premium, it is best to move on to passages requiring the full ensemble. Time will be utilized much more effectively if you leave the nasty work for the sectional.

We have all had the situation where we keep working a certain section to death, because it bugs us. "They are going to play it now, and they are going to play it properly!!!" If that is a familiar feeling, you need rehearsal discipline. That will tell you to leave it for the time being, and catch it in sectional.

Pinpoint the areas in need of work. Have the members of the various sections make a note of what is particularly difficult for them. It is all about time management, detail and efficiency.

In the first part of the year, sectionals are good for more than just cleaning up notes, articulations and rhythms. Work on developing the section sound, intonation, blend and balance. Every member of the section needs to know where he/she fits, how loud it should be, and basically what are the expectations of the section.

The optimum length for a sectional is an hour, to an hour and a half. The whole point is to clean up the sections in need of work. To play through entire tunes is most likely a waste of time. Go directly to the tough spots.

Students should also know that they are responsible for learning the basic notes and rhythms during their private practice time. This may not be up to tempo, but at least the foundation is there. During the sectional rehearsal, there is time to focus on such things as marking articulations, accents, cut-offs, dynamics, pitch problems, and other aspects such as when to start and stop a fall. Every detail which pertains to that section can be worked out in a very specific manner, without wasting the time of everyone else in the ensemble.

Some explanation of the details in the above paragraph should be clarified. Articulations can be marked as short (·), long (-), and various accents (>, ^). Many people forget to deal with the end of a note and when to stop it (the cut-off). Once you have decided when you want the note to stop, mark it with a minus and then the beat. For example if you have a half note and want it to stop on beat three, simply mark it -3. If you want that note a little longer, mark it -3+. This means to cut it off on the "and" of three. Although this seems quite simple, it is surprising how few students know the

answer to the question, "on what beat do you cut off a dotted quarter note?" We pay so much attention to where the notes start, but tend to forget when they are supposed to end. Naturally if everyone starts and stops exactly together, the ensemble will sound much tighter. Dynamics are marked easily with the traditional markings *ppp* through *fff*, and the variations between. The beauty of dealing with dynamics in sectional is that you can really give them the idea of just how much variation from loud to soft that you want. It is always more than they think.

There are two problems at work, concerning the marking of pitch problems. One concerns the hearing and tuning of the complex harmonies found in jazz, and the other with the inherent pitch problems of the instruments. Marking pitch problems is simply a matter of putting an up or down arrow above a note. Obviously if the note is sharp, put a down arrow above the note, so that it will be lipped down.

In tuning complex harmonies, it is important to isolate, play, listen and then tune each chord. Many of the harmonies will be uncomfortable for the students. For example, the interval of a minor second is not a pretty sound when isolated. Students will hear it, and back away from it because of the "bite" it creates. When written in a chord, and it happens regularly, that same minor second, that when isolated sounded so harsh, is what is partially responsible for producing those wonderful complex jazz harmonies. When students are introduced to those "biting" harmonies, and the importance is explained, the harmonies will be played with a different attitude. Naturally the voicings have to be in tune, and that is the reason for isolating each chord.

Isolating a minor second interval can happen in full rehearsal or in sectional, it doesn't really matter. What is important is that the "crunch" of a minor second is heard, and then put in context with the full harmony. If they understand the sound and how it all fits together, chances are that the chord will be played more intelligently.

The other problem is that of horns having inherent tuning problems. Very common tuning problems occur, for example, on trumpet. In the low range of the horn, when you start using valve combinations of 1 and 3, or 2 and 3, or 1, 2 and 3, we know that those notes will be sharp. Most of the time, students don't realize just how sharp they actually are. By understanding where each note fits in the chord, what and where the tight harmonies are, and which notes on particular horns are out of tune, you will stand at least a fighting chance of getting things in tune (no guarantees, but it is better than flying blind!!). Chord balancing can be a time where you not only work on the fundamentals of tuning and balance, but you can use it to teach a bit of theory. Explain the chord they are playing and then figure out what part of the chord each person is

playing. When they know how the notes relate to each other, they will hear it better and then be able to adjust the intonation accordingly.

The subject of marking falls is also one which needs explanation. A fall is simply a note which is held, and then the pitch drops. This may be played as a fast chromatic scale down, or done by dropping the jaw and allowing the note to go out of tune. On trumpet it is often done with the valves put down only half way (half valve). Trombone can do it by simply extending the slide. The physical playing of the fall isn't usually the problem, it is usually a problem of context. If you listen to young bands playing a fall, they usually get there, hit the note and drop immediately. The total effect has been lost. What should happen is the note gets held, and then the fall starts. What needs to be marked is when to start the fall, and when it stops. For example, if you have a half note written with a fall, the common way students play it is to play the note for less than a quarter note value, and then quickly drop. They end whenever they get to the bottom of the horn. Let me explain how it should be played, keeping in mind that this is an effect, and therefore should be overemphasized. 1) play the note for full value, and often even longer, before starting the fall, 2) mark when the fall should actually start, if it is a half note, the fall might start on three, or you might want it on four, or even later, such as beat one of the next bar, 3) mark when the fall should be finished, in this case it may finish on beat one, two bars later.

Style and tempo will influence the length of the fall. Just make sure to really set the harmony, before starting the fall. The fall is secondary to the harmony, but most students rush through the process making the fall the most important factor, and ignoring the harmony preceding it.

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Rehearsal Techniques for the Jazz Orchestra: Conducting by Gordon Foote

In a jazz context, the term "conducting" doesn't accurately describe the function of the person standing in front of the ensemble. Perhaps it should really be called ensemble management. Many people who have studied conducting in the classical sense, often assume that the same rules apply when directing a jazz group. This just isn't the case. Hopefully the following guidelines will help you with your jazz groups and give some food for thought.

It is important to keep in mind that the majority of work with a jazz group is completed during the rehearsal. When it comes to the concert situation, the director assumes a role which might be considered closer to that of a traffic cop, rather than a conductor.

First rule: forget almost everything you have learned about conducting concert bands, choirs and orchestras. There is very little carryover. The first difference, you don't use a baton. The second rule, for the most part, get out of the way and let the band play. There are many directors who feel they need to conduct everything.

The easiest way to go through the norms of directing/conducting jazz groups, is to divide it into categories of what, when, where, why, and how. We already know who, and that is you!

What

When it comes right down to it, there are very few things in jazz which require any conducting. Most of the work is done in rehearsal. In the performance setting, the ensemble should pretty much take care of itself. Naturally you have to get the group started, and that means a count-off. Depending on the style and tempo you will conduct more or less. For example, ballads should have more give and take in the tempos, sort of elastic time, and therefore require more conducting through the changes. If a tune doesn't change tempo, after the ensemble is playing, they really don't require any more conducting. There are certain things, which need to be conducted, but the majority of the time will be spent listening. The major function of the director is to count-off

Rehearsal Techniques for the Jazz Orchestra: Conducting by Gordon Foote

tempos and cut-off the last pause (in other words, get them started and then get them stopped). In between those two functions, not much is required in terms of actual time conducting. You need to conduct tempo changes, cues, open sections, the end of open sections and ballads. Balance and intonation problems can also be pointed out.

Basic directing can be divided into two categories: 1) time conducting or time management, 2) form and traffic management.

Time conducting means the actual conducting, beat patterns, movements and gestures using standard beat patterns. Time management refers to keeping tempos "in the pocket", not rushing or dragging. You could call it the time police. That is usually done by snapping fingers, or clapping (on two and four in swing, and one and three in latin) to illustrate where the time should be placed. Often it is the drummer or the bass player (or both) who can help to rectify the situation. If you have eye contact and hand signals worked out, they will get the message and start to improve the situation.

Hand signals that work in order to change the tempo are quite simple. If the tempo is dragging, just make circles in the air with your hand. If the tempo is rushing, put your two open hands together in front of you in the shape of a "V", which means to get back into the pocket. Often if you just snap or clap for a couple of bars, the time usually finds the pocket again. These signals are used all the time in rehearsals, giving us a way of communicating during a performance.

What form and traffic management means, is simply that it is the director's job to control the flow of soloists, creating open sections for soloists, plus adding backgrounds and endings. To keep your group on their toes, it is important to vary the order of things. Don't perform the tunes the same way. Use different soloists, open sections up, add backgrounds, and rotate which sections will play the backgrounds.

Most of that last paragraph probably needs some explanation. First of all, jazz tunes have form, for example, twelve bar blues. Arrangements are written with sections for solos. Each twelve bar section is the beginning of another chorus. Instead of just playing through the twelve bar solo section once and then continuing with the arrangement, it is possible to create an open section to make more room for the soloist. It is also possible to have several soloists in one open section. It is like adding open repeats, where the cue to either add backgrounds or move to the next section is given by the director. The easiest way to "open up" a section is to form an "O" with your hands. Since you will have told them where the form begins and ends, they will know where the open section is, and will keep repeating it until the signal to "go on". That

signal is simply a closed fist held over your head. When the group gets to the end of the form, it is like removing the temporary repeat sign and continuing with the piece.

During these open sections, there are often backgrounds, lines, or punches in the arrangement. Mix and match who plays them, and when. Point to a soloist. That person will stand up and take a solo from the beginning of the form. For a trumpet solo, have the saxes play the background. Next time, don't have any backgrounds at all. Perhaps one time through have everyone play them. Changing soloists and backgrounds every time you play a particular tune will accomplish several things. It will give the solos added textural interest, it will keep everyone on their toes because they don't know who is playing first, it keeps the tunes fresh, and it keeps everyone concentrating on the form. By mixing and matching soloists, form, and backgrounds, the tune will be different every time it is performed. The tune will start to evolve and the students will become much more creative in the process. They will start to feel the freedom to experiment. It should be made clear that the form never varies. In other words if it is an AABA form, that must always be respected. Solos must keep that form, and not just be played over a repeated "A" section.

When to conduct

For the most part, you will not conduct. It is however permissible to conduct through tempo changes, in odd meter tunes, and in ballads, since time there is somewhat elastic (or should be). Naturally you will have to conduct pauses and releases. Dynamic contrasts will also be indicated.

Force the group to develop and rely on its own time. This makes them use their ears. They will be much more aware and focused if you give them the responsibility of maintaining the tempo and groove. Remember that the tradition of concert band and orchestral conducting does not apply here.

If by chance you have combos at your school, there should be no conductor at all, just the people in the group. Think of any of the great jazz combos, there is never a conductor. They will have to be responsible for all tempo changes, starting and stopping, form, and backgrounds. During rehearsals the director will work on developing the ensemble as well as the music, but this should be done without actually standing in front of the group conducting.

The movements of conducting

Hopefully you have seen and heard jazz groups of various levels. This in itself is an irreplaceable learning experience. Try for a moment to separate the movements, motions and gestures of the conductor from the music. Everyone seems to develop an individual style, but keep in mind that the movements should fit the music. There are those who dance, jump and flail, as if trying to direct a 747 around an airport, and those at the other extreme who are so mousy, that it seems as though the ensemble is running over them. If you video yourself, look for a few things. First of all, do your motions fit the styles and dynamics, are they too large or too small, too jerky or too smooth for the style and volume? All of these are subjective to a point, but if you have never really looked at your actual conducting, after seeing yourself on video, you might decide to modify your movements. Most often, we just get involved with conducting, and never give it another thought. This can be a problem.

Have you ever seen the conductor who is working so hard, jumping, running, wildly waving arms, hair flying, apparently with the thought in mind that this display of energy will improve the performance of the group? Sadly enough, it can often have the opposite effect. It is a difficult balance, trying to get energy from the ensemble without overdoing it from a conducting standpoint.

A very good idea is to force yourself to step back a pace or two, and listen to the ensemble. Without moving, just focus on the sound of the ensemble, and listen. When you separate yourself from the ensemble, and really listen, it is amazing how much more you will hear. It will allow you to be much more efficient and effective in rehearsal, because you will hear the problems much more quickly and clearly. Spend time focusing your listening on various areas of the ensemble. Listen to each section and to each individual of each section; listen for balance, blend, sound quality, intonation balance, phrasing, dynamics, articulation, and style. Listen to the hi-hat, the bass drum, the ride cymbal, the bass sound, attack, style etc. What you are doing is elevating your hearing and perception of the elements necessary in order to improve the performance of your ensemble. Things will be much clearer if you disengage from the ensemble from time to time.

Listen to the ensemble from a cerebral point of view, and a musical point of view, and then from a visceral point of view. Each will complement the other.

The count-off

One of the most important aspects of directing is to get the group started, with the right tempo, the right volume, the appropriate amount of energy, and the right groove. What happens from the first note, is a direct result of the count-off.

An easy way to get the tempo and feel you want, is to simply sing the melody in your head. When that feels good and is firmly established, start the count-off. Impress upon the students that the tune doesn't start at the first note, but rather at the first snap of the count-off. They must concentrate on the time and feel, in order that the tune starts together, and feels good from beat one. Too often the director starts the count-off and the ensemble is still talking and obviously not concentrating. If that is the case, the ensemble could be several measures into the tune before the ensemble locks in the time. The tune starts at the first beat of the count-off, and it is your responsibility to expect and reinforce that.

The length of the count-off will vary depending on the tempo and style of the piece. The faster the tune, the longer it takes to establish the tempo, therefore it will need a longer count-off. Ballads on the other hand really don't need a count-off, just conduct one beat before the top and it is away. With ballads it is essential to have the attention of everyone before starting, better still, insist on it! It is very difficult to start a slow tempo and be together. The only way is to subdivide. Don't accept an entrance that is not together. Stop and start again until it is together. Try clapping the first note of a ballad. If it is a soft entrance it will take some serious work to produce it accurately.

A typical sequence for the count-off of a medium swing tune might go as follows, sing the tune in your head until you like the feel and tempo, start snapping (which does not stop until the tune has started) on two and four with the tune still going in your head. With everyone is concentrating and with eye contact (especially the drummer), tell the group the length of the count-off (usually four bars), then start the count-off. When the group is used to your counting, you won't need to explain it. The usual four bar count-off is: one...two...one.two.one, two, three, four.

Try to show the energy and dynamic required for the particular piece, in the count-off. A soft entrance will have a different type of count-off than one that starts at *fff*.

A very common mistake is one where the count-off is at one tempo, and then the ensemble starts at a different tempo. Do not accept a tempo that is different from that which was given. Stop and redo it until the count-off, and ensemble tempo match.

Another common problem is that of an inconsistent tempo during the count-off. This is usually noticeable at the beginning of a faster tempo tune, or one that starts at *ff*. In a four bar count-off, the first two bars are in tempo, but the last two speed up, trying to convey the energy that is expected at the beginning of the tune.

Throughout the tempo spectrum of swing tunes, there is a point at which the snaps will shift from beats two and four, to beats one and three. With very fast tempos, it is best to snap just one beat to the bar. Although it is mostly psychological, the ensemble will play with a much more relaxed feel, if everyone thinks one beat to the bar. Thinking on beats two and four at fast tempos will make everything feel choppy and bouncy. Try thinking the big beat, just one to the bar.

A typical fast tempo swing tune count-off might work like this (perhaps think of Cherokee, where the half note might be mm 132) sing the melody and think the tempo, start snapping one to the bar (on beat one), give an eight bar count-off.... One....., one....., one..., one..., one,two,one,two, and then the ensemble kicks. From then on, think one beat to the bar.

The metronome

This can be a very revealing and at the same time, a very helpful and useful tool. Consistent time is a concern of every musician. We speed up, and we slow down, all the while we are trying to control the time, and find that even tempo.

If we are always conscious of time and work to improve it, eventually it will improve. The metronome is one of those tools to help us along the way. Think of the metronome as a speedometer. You can use it to tell when you have improved technical speed, and when you have the tune at tempo. It also keeps you honest because it doesn't change (if you have a good metronome).

Try using it in sectional or full band rehearsals. The ones with the light will show you the tempo even if you can't hear it. Another trick is to plug one of the electronic types into an amplifier. Everyone can hear the clicks. So many rhythms have a psychological effect, especially when going from triples to duples, or vice versa. When playing with the metronome, you get a much clearer picture of how things should line up, and can then compensate for the psychological factor.

In sectionals, it can be used to rehearse a particularly difficult passage, by starting it slowly, and then speeding it up, notch by notch. Sometimes this is the only way some members of the ensemble will practice.

Put the metronome on at half note equals 100. The first click would be beat one, and the second would be beat three. Listen to it like that for a few bars. Without touching the metronome, have your mind manipulate what were beats one and three, into beats two and four. Beats one and three should feel like latin, or straight eighth notes, on beats two and four, it should take the position of the hi hat, and feel like swing music. Work so that you can easily manipulate the clicks from one and three, to two and four, and back again.

Try clapping with the metronome at the very slowest marking. You will probably find that it is almost impossible to mask the click for more than once or maybe twice. Sometimes you are ahead, and other times you are obviously late. This is a very good exercise for practicing subdividing beats. With the metronome at quarter note equals 40, try to subdivide the beat in eighths, eighth note triplets, sixteenth notes, and sixteenth note triplets. Hopefully you will get a better grasp of the beat. Remember so much of it is psychological.

Try clapping through the spectrum of rhythms. With the metronome at quarter note equals 60, clap two bars of quarter notes, quarter note triplets, eighth notes, eighth note triplets, sixteenth notes, etc. Then come back down again to quarter notes. This will give much needed help the psychological problems of going from duples to triples and vice versa. Drummers spend a good deal of time working on those transitions in practice. Horn players and singers should also work on that aspect of time management.

Another way of manipulating time is to try and play or clap slightly ahead, or behind the click. It isn't rushing or dragging, because you are not changing tempo. It would be the same as if you started two metronomes a fraction of a second apart. Assuming they are good metronomes, they should have that split second difference. Think of one as the anchor, and the other one that roves either ahead or behind. If the two click together, it feels natural and normal, nothing out of the ordinary. Keeping the anchor in mind as the control, listen for the one that is just slightly behind. Now put it just slightly ahead. Each case has a slightly different feel in terms of light or heavy. When slightly behind, it feels somewhat lethargic and heavy. When ahead, it feels lighter and more energetic. If you move it further and further ahead, it will move into the realm of rushing, and likewise with the other direction, dragging.

A very good exercise for your bass player and drummer, is to have one act as the anchor, minding the store, while the other plays slightly ahead, and then slightly behind. Then switch roles. This will take some time to develop, but hopefully the end result will be a considerably heightened awareness of time, and time interaction. They will also start to feel, and know what to do when it needs more energy. Technical abilities will also be improved.

As you can see, there are many places where the metronome is very handy, but one place where it really should not be used, is on the concert stage. There is something very unmusical, and seems to disrupt the musical flow, when you see a director setting the metronome to find the tempo for the next tune. That is something that should be left up to musicality and feel. Sing the tune in your head until it feels good, and then start the count-off. What happens if your batteries go dead?!

Hopefully these concepts and tips will help. The best thing you can do, is spend time with recordings of great ensembles. Listen to the sound, phrasing, articulation, energy, soloists, dynamic range, time feel, groove, balance and blend. When you know the sound and style you want, then it is a matter of getting it out of your students.

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Rehearsal Techniques for the Jazz Orchestra: Conductor Evaluation by Gordon Foote

These are all fairly self-explanatory and are intended to serve as a checklist.

Pre Performance

- Voice quality
- Clear, logical instructions
- Problem spots pointed out
- General energy level and attitude

Conducting Technique

- Count-off explained
- Count-off audible
- Count-off in correct tempo
- Beat pattern easy to follow
- Cues given clearly and well prepared
- Dynamics indicated
- Major divisions of the piece indicated
- Does conductor dictate time or merely follow

Rehearsal techniques

- Time (rush or drag)
- Sound quality of the ensemble
- Intonation
- Articulation, attacks and releases
- Dynamics
- Phrasing
- Style
- Balance of chords
- Rhythmic accuracy
- Pace of the rehearsal

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Rehearsal Techniques for the Jazz Orchestra: Festival Participation by Gordon Foote

The notion of participating in music festivals has been a wonderful concept for a very long time. Students and teachers alike, have the opportunity to meet people from various places, exchange ideas, and learn from hearing other groups. Festivals are often the perfect place for networking and renewing old contacts. It is also a situation where you can hear new repertoire that might work for your band and also get a sense of perspective on quality levels for various age groups.

There are basically two types of festivals connected with the educational system, competitive and non-competitive. In the realm of competitive festivals, there are two sub-categories: those where the groups are rated against a standard and those where actual grades are calculated, resulting in the awarding of first, second and third place.

Playing against a standard usually offers awards of gold, silver and bronze. In a category, any group performing up to the standard would be given a gold award. In this type of festival, one band is not singled out as being the best band in the class. The goal of such festivals is to emphasize and encourage the learning and performing of music, while discouraging the competitive aspect.

In the strictly competitive type of festival, the results are often seen as the group winning first place goes home very happy, with all other groups in the class going home disappointed. Unfortunately the element of music education takes a back seat to winning first place. If the goal of the competition is to win, many groups move the focus from creating music, to winning first place. They want to make those three tunes sound great. In the process, many of the basic skills of learning to play music are neglected.

The totally non-competitive type of festival doesn't award any grades or rankings of any sort, allowing the students and teachers to focus on developing the educational and musical aspects of performing. Everyone listens to the other groups, enjoying and supporting the performances. The atmosphere is much more conducive to good music and education.

One of the greatest experiences your students can have is to attend one of the I.A.J.E. (International Association for Jazz Education) Annual Conferences. Each year the conference is held on the second weekend of January. The location moves to different U.S. cities (plus Toronto) each year. Ensembles must be invited to perform at the conference, and are selected by an audition recording. Performance slots are limited and many groups from all over the world apply to perform. It is a real honour to be selected. If you want an inspirational learning experience, attend one of these conferences.

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Rehearsal Techniques for the Jazz Orchestra: Final Thoughts by Gordon Foote

Group Dynamics

There are no two groups alike. They are always a combination of diverse personalities with varying levels of musicality, skill and talent. The goal is to use all of these factors to create a group that reaches or preferably, exceeds expectations. At many levels, the individual players are not necessarily very strong, but when all of the elements are developed, the sum should be greater than the combination of individual parts. Ensemble playing and musicality should surpass the actual musical level of the individuals.

When you devote time to the ensemble you might want to think of dividing it into a 60/40 ratio. The 60% might be called preparation and development and the 40% is the actual music making.

Preparation and development

This includes the time needed to build a team: fund-raising, reputation building, publicity and promotion, trip planning, touring, organizing, score study, self-development, attending conferences, searching out repertoire, setting goals, establishing expectations, building momentum, group dynamics, instilling a sense of responsibility, addressing your weaknesses.

The music making

The music making part includes: rehearsal time (both full band and sectionals), attention to individual students, performing concerts and making recordings.

Address your weaknesses

If you are a horn player and don't know much about the rhythm section, spend some time on each of the instruments. Learn what it feels like to sit behind the drums, or walk lines on the bass. When you took your teacher training you very likely spent time in the techniques courses learning to play brass, woodwind and percussion instruments. What most people really need is a techniques course that deals with jazz rhythm section instruments.

Check your knowledge of theory and harmony

Can you transpose a score from concert pitch to written and vice versa? Most published scores tend to be transposed so you need to be able to quickly convert back to concert pitches in order to analyze the harmony. Make sure you understand the transpositions of all the instruments.

Check out the arrangements

What is the form of the piece, where are notes doubled, who is playing the thirds of chords, where are the color notes. Do the students know where the melody is, where the backgrounds are, where they are in the form, what is important in the music at all times? Can you hear individual notes in the chords and name them in terms of function (the third, the flat nine etc.)? Do you understand functional harmony (now we are going to the four chord, or this is a turnaround of III, VI, II, V)?

Investigate the styles that your groups are rehearsing

Go to the original recordings and listen for sound quality, articulation, phrasing, time feel and time placement of notes, dynamic control, note shape, inflections and vibrato. Imitate all the details. Remember that you are learning to speak a new dialect (the dialect of swing or funk or samba etc.) and you want to speak it as if it is your first language.

Search Out Repertoire

You need to spend a great deal of time searching out repertoire. Check out the major catalogues and listen to sound bites on the websites. Go to concerts, festivals, workshops and conferences. Take note of the tunes you like, making sure to include the name of the writer/arranger and if possible the publisher. Your students should be exposed to the music from the many big bands throughout history.

Ask for Help

Don't be afraid to ask local musicians for help . People are usually very happy to come in and share their knowledge.

Have your students study privately if at all possible

This is especially important if it relates to instruments where you aren't comfortable (drums, bass, guitar and piano are usually the least understood). Most people have studied piano in a classical sense, but have no idea how to voice chords how to comp in various styles.

Give complete instructions

If you find yourself saying things like "you have to listen" or "you need to play that better" you should think about how you could be more effective by giving more complete instructions. Instead of saying "you have to listen", perhaps it should be something like "you have to listen to the lead trombone in bars 6 through 10. It is the melody that you are doubling, so match the sound quality and intonation".

Don't waste time in rehearsal

Since rehearsal time is very limited, there should always be a sense of urgency. You hear a problem, expect the band to stop immediately, point out the problem and give the instruction for addressing the problem, then move on quickly. It is important however not to move on if they haven't fixed the problem.

Energy

If you want energy to come from your ensemble, then you have to give energy in your teaching and rehearsing. You should never sit down in front while you are actively rehearsing a big band. Energy starts from the front! Students will be naturally lazy if you let them (no air, no sound, no dynamics, no snap to the articulations, bad time feel). It's up to you to keep them on their game.

Expect Quality

The director has to know what he/she wants and can realistically expect. Then it is up to you to make sure that you don't accept a product that doesn't meet those expectations. Expect quality every time.

Work on the fundamentals

Sound quality, dynamic range, articulation accuracy, rhythmic accuracy, note shape (both dynamically and pitch shape), intonation, balance of chords, time feel, stylistic accuracy, note cut-offs (the placement in time and the shape of the release).

To sum it up, there is no magic to having a wonderfully energetic, impeccably clean group that sounds great and plays musically. It all stems from a director who is committed to the students, the group and the music. One who is organized and has a solid work ethic. Presence, personality and charisma are also major assets.

Good luck and good music making!

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