

GENERATION Z JAZZ REHEARSAL TECHNIQUES: **“Whose Band Is It, Anyway?”**

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According to Wikipedia, “Generation Z (or Gen Z for short), colloquially also known as zoomers, is the demographic cohort succeeding Millennials and preceding Generation Alpha. Researchers and media use the mid-to-late 1990s as starting birth years and the early 2010s as ending birth years. Most members of Generation Z are children of Generation X.

In his 2017 forbes.com article “How Generation Z is Shaping the Change in Education”, Sieva Kozinsky stated that “Gen Z students tend to thrive when they are given the opportunity to have a fully immersive educational experience and they even enjoy the challenges of being a part of it. For instance, 51% of surveyed students said they learn best by doing while only 12% said they learn through listening.”

Generally speaking, Generation Z students (current grades 7-12) are described as social, self-directed, and seeking new ideas and experiences. They process information quickly, want to be heard, and want training to be flexible. Generation Z students are not passive; they want to be active in their learning.

All of this challenges the traditional conductor/student model. A different way of thinking about the rehearsal model is required, that incorporates collaboration, student engagement and creative thinking, rather than utilizing students as “worker bees” to create musical performances based on the conductor’s artistry and decision-making.

In time, much of the decision-making (and therefore, more ownership) can be transferred to the students in the ensemble. The resulting musical knowledge and understanding is profound, exploding the stereotypical roles prevalent in many ensembles in which the teacher is the “expert”, and the students implement his/her decisions without question or intellectual/emotional involvement.

Setting the Stage:

In order to engage Generation Z students, and also to move along discussion and collaborative decision-making, there need to be some fundamental common understandings from which all participants can work. Some of the teacher/student interactions involve a form of discovery learning, in which the student(s) will glean a deeper understanding of the music they are playing by acknowledging (and then employing) some core concepts as they relate to the particular section of music; this process will both contribute to a greater understanding of musical performance, and also build ownership to the higher quality performance.

Questioning Techniques:

In rehearsal, verbally frame your musical questions in the larger context of the “core concepts” (below). As students become fluent with the core concepts, ask them to apply the relevant concept to the decision required. This will deepen their understanding of style, and create transferable knowledge to new music.

Core Concepts:

- Emphasize articulations (longs/shorts/accents) & dynamics
- Shape notes of length (“pulse” or fp concept)
- Shape all phrases to peaks (melodies and backgrounds)
- Build energy & volume behind solos
- On repeated sections, build energy & volume 2nd time
- Reinforce specific style by emphasizing “signpost notes”
 - in rock/funk/latin: emphasize notes on the beat, and notes that imply the beat (off-beat notes tied to the next beat or off-beat notes followed by a rest on the beat)
 - in swing: emphasize beats 2 & 4 in rhythm section, and off-beat notes followed by a rest on the beat

High-yield “Leading” Questions:

So, will we play all notes in this section the same volume? If not, which ones will be play louder and why?

Are we going to play all of this note (ie: a whole note) the same volume? If not, what are we going to do (ie: fp, fp with crescendo)

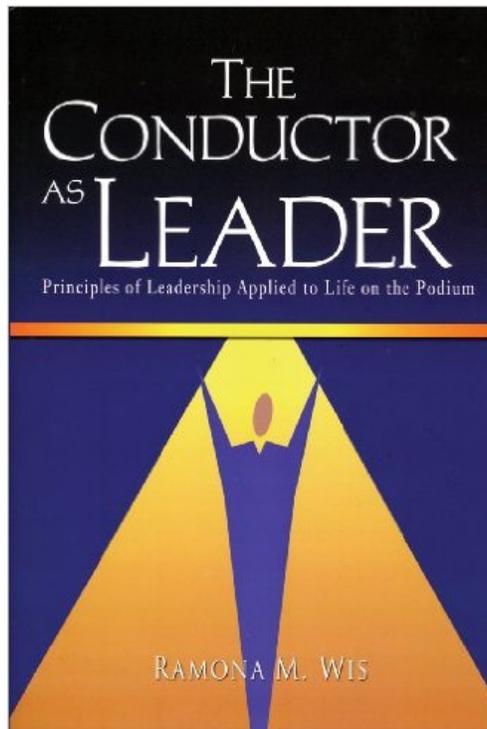
If we are going to crescendo, where will that crescendo start and end?

To where does this phrase build (ie. Which note in the phrase should be the loudest)?

This section is repeated. Are we going to play it the same volume both times? What does the orchestration tell us about what the composer is trying to accomplish (ie: adding in background figures the second time)?

What are the important notes in this section (important because they reinforce the style)?

What is my (the student’s) role in this section?



I have found this book to be a helpful resource in crystalizing my own philosophies and practices. Please find below some key excerpts:

Artisans vs Artists

Page 75:the musicians have functioned as **artisans** instead of artists, doing what we tell them to do but only minimally creating while they do it.

Page 85: Creativity cannot be conceptualized as being the sole prerogative of the teacher-director, the students being **artisans** who only carry out his or her artistic wishes. The students must share in the creativity.....

Power:

Page xi: There has been a fundamental shift in thinking, a shift from ME to THEM; from a focus on position and **power** to one of leading by serving. In our defense, conductors are seldom trained to make this psychological shift.....

Autonomy:

Page 90: What matters is that we begin to look at the way we shape the learning of repertoire and the development of musical skill, understanding and artistry so that it leads to more engaged, invested, creative, thinking and **autonomous** musicians

Page 93: Sometimes we choose to develop and encourage the musicians' **autonomy** to the point where we "[turn] over responsibility for decision-making and problem- solving" to them — we delegate. (chamber ensembles)

Empowerment:

Page 71: They spend a significant amount of their preparation time devising teaching strategies and work to find ways to involve the musicians in the learning process so that they become engaged and ultimately, **empowered** to make creative decisions ...

Page 86: Collaboration in the rehearsal is based on three things: sharing our insight, engaging the ensemble in meaningful ways and **empowering** musicians to contribute to the decision-making process.