



NOW WHAT?

Tips and Strategies for the Middle School Jazz Band

Mike Kamuf, Clinician
Alfred Music Publishing
www.alfred.com
www.mikekamuf.com

Management

- Auditions vs. no auditions
 - Formal auditions lead to an “exclusive” approach
 - Sign ups lead to an “inclusive” approach but concept checks are needed to ensure success
 - Combining these approaches might be necessary if you have too many students signing up to play the same instrument
 - If auditioning, set reasonable expectations in your choice of audition material
 - If not auditioning, still hold students accountable for playing a short passage and/concepts
 - Great beginning drum set resources: Basic Beats by Steve Houghton (PAS website); Alfred Drumset 101 by Dave Black & Houghton (Book & DVD)
- Communication:
 - Prior to the first rehearsal:
 - Develop a contract with expectations for attendance, rehearsal standards and concert uniform that also includes performance dates
 - Ask for email addresses so distribution list can be set up
 - Other avenues for communication: school webpage, newsletters, Remind, Twitter
 - Produce a Fact Sheet that outlines:
 - Rehearsal expectations
 - Attendance policy
 - Any school district expectations related to extracurricular activities
 - General rehearsal schedule
 - Preview any large expenses that may occur during the year (i.e trips)
 - Communication protocols
 - Specific rehearsal schedule
 - At the first rehearsal:
 - Distribute contracts and address your expectations for attendance, rehearsal standards and concert uniform with students
 - Have a plan that focuses on listening to basic articulations
 - Rehearsing your rhythm section students prior to the first full band rehearsal allows you to address:
 - Importance of listening and working as a team (particularly for bass and drums)
 - Bass & cymbal time alignment/subdivision
 - Instrument specific notation issues:
 - Guitar: rhythmic notation, comping

- Piano: comping
- Bass: 1/2 position
- Drums: decoding the staff assignments of kit parts

Warm-Ups

- Integral part of any student ensemble rehearsal
- Should focus on pitch, tone, balance, articulation and groove
- Short chord studies or long tone exercises, chromatic scales, call & response exercises, articulation studies can improve these focal points
- *Effective Warm Ups For Developing Jazz Ensembles* is a collection of exercises that are useful in helping students listen to and improve their pitch, articulation and ability to groove (free download on my website).
- I. Chord Studies:
 - There are three short exercises in the key areas of Bb major, Eb Major and F major. Each exercise should be played at a slow tempo with an emphasis on smooth articulations and proper balance in the winds.
- II. Chromatic Scales:
 - Improves student technique and their ability to accurately perform enharmonic spellings.
- III. Call & Response:
 - The style and key area of a performance piece should dictate the vamp/exercise that is played. Count off the desired vamp for the rhythm section and let them settle into a groove. On your instrument, play pattern #1 ("The Call") and have the students play the pattern back to you ("The Response") . Do not move on to another pattern until you feel all wind and vibraphone students are accurate with the notes, rhythms, and articulations of the pattern.
- IV. Articulation Studies:
 - Use swing 8th notes or even 8th notes. Reinforce capped accents (^), tenuto marks (-) and sideways accents (>). Can be performed in a variety of ways.

Getting Students Improvising

- Use a short passage from a chart or warm-up
- Should have one or two chords (i.e - I - IV or I-V)
- Have students use one note at first (tonic)
- Gradually, adding one note at a time, each pitch of the tonic minor pentatonic (ex. in the key of Bb: Bb, Db, Eb, F, Ab, Bb)
- Model an example for students
- Set the solos at 4 or 8 bars each so students are not overwhelmed
- Perfect avenue to encourage creativity (NAfME Standard 3) and to build confidence in your rhythm section players

Making Connections

- Listen to recordings in rehearsal
- Publisher demonstration recordings are wonderful and can help aide students in learning the structure and components of an arrangement

- Playing historically significant audio and/or video will help the students to better understand the tune, the style, and the art form
- Encourage the students to attend a live jazz concert
- Bring colleagues/professional performers into your rehearsals
- Take the ensemble to festivals

Literature Selection

- What to look for in a beginning jazz chart:
 - In swing tunes, repetitive or “riff” based melodies
 - Repetitive rhythm section parts
 - Guitar chord sheets
 - Slow moving harmonic progression
 - Solo sections have a limited harmonic pallet; can use a scale or two for improvisation
 - Printed guide solos
 - Options for multiple solos
 - Options parts for flute, clarinet, horn, tuba, vibes, auxiliary percussion

Suggested Literature Titles

- Charts that work for the very beginning of the year:
 - Listen Here – Eddie Harris/Victor Lopez - soul jazz (all horns have guide solo cued; two chords – great vehicle to start improv)
 - Yeah, You Right - Eddie Harris/Victor Lopez -soul jazz (no solos)
 - Baby, That’s What I Need (aka Walk Tall) - Joe Zawinul/Vince Gassi (funky soul jazz, written 16 bar tenor solo)
 - Mercy, Mercy - Joe Zawinul/Mike Story - rock (short piano solo, could be opened up)
 - Escalator Blues -Jeff Darrohn- swing (short 4 bar solos)
 - Hit the Road Jack - Percy Mayfield/Mike Lewis - swing (repetitive figures, no solos)
 - Blues March -Carl Strommen - blues in F (written out solos, could be opened up)
- Charts that work for the second half of the year:
 - Swing:
 - Work Song - Nat Adderly/Terry White (16 bar form - d dorian)
 - Mr. P.C. - John Coltrane/Terry White (minor blues - d dorian)
 - Splanky - Neal Hefti/Roy Phillippe (Basie blues - Eb)
 - Cherry Point - Neal Hefti/Roy Phillippe (Basie blues - Eb)
 - Shout, Stomp & Swing - Les Sabina (8 bar solos)
 - Latin:
 - Sombrero Sam - Charles Lloyd/Vince Gassi (two chords for solos)
 - Let My People Go - arr. Rick Hirsch (g minor tonality in solos)
 - Cubano Chant - Ray Bryant/Mike Story (solos over 8 bar g minor vamp)
 - Niobe - Vince Gassi (bossa with very nice changes)
 - Ballads
 - Dreamsville - Henry Mancini/Vince Gassi (tenor feature, nicely written out solo, tasteful & very playable ensemble writing)

- Azure - Duke Ellington/Mike Lewis (piano feature, very playable ensemble writing)
- Rock
 - Jive Samba - Nat Adderly/Terry White (tenor & trumpet solos - solos cross cued - very cool bass line)
 - Sideways Walking Dog - Zachary Smith (tenor solo, charts sounds more difficult than it is)
 - Zero Gravity - Vince Gassi (playable melodies, cool harmony, no solos)

Supplemental Materials

- The Articulate Jazz Musician by Caleb Chapman & Jeff Coffin
 - Perfect for intermediate to advanced students
 - Can be used by individuals, small groups or large ensembles
 - Organized in 17 units with key concept(s) for each unit
 - Approaches articulation as a language
 - Covers basic jazz articulations and embellishments in swing and funk styles
- Alfred Easy Play Alongs make the learning to improvise and read lead sheets an easy one.
 - Guide parts are provided for rhythm section players to begin comping, walking bass lines, etc.
 - Guide solos are provided for students to use as a springboard for embellishment and beginning improvisation.
- Improvisation sections on many Alfred/Belwin jazz charts can be practiced with these play alongs:
 - Ain't Misbehavin' (Waller/Ford) - Vol. 1
 - After You've Gone (Layton/Sigler) - Vol. 2
 - Blues March (Golson/White) - Vol. 2
 - Jive Samba - (Adderly/White) - Vol. 1
 - Killer Joe (Golson/DeSpain) - Vol. 1
 - Lazy Bird (Coltrane/White) - Vol. 2
 - Lester Leaps In (Young/Sigler)- Vol. 2
 - Little Sunflower (Hubbard/Kamuf) - Vol. 1
 - Listen Here (Harris/Lopez) - Vol.3
 - My Little Suede Shoes (Parker/Sigler) - Vol. 1
 - Night & Day (Porter/Pugh) - Vol. 3
 - Perdido (Tizol/Lewis) -Vol.1
 - Recorda Me (Henderson/Berg) - Vol.3
 - Road Song (Montgomery/White) -Vol. 3
 - Scapple From the Apple (Parker/Bandman) - Vol. 2
 - Softly, As In a Morning Sunrise(arr. Rivello) - Vol.3
 - St. James Infirmary (Primrose/Davis) - Vol. 2 (does not work with the Kamuf chart)
 - Summertime (Gershwin/Rivello) - Vol. 2

Conclusion

- Score & parts for Effective Warm Ups For Beginning Jazz Ensemble and sample documents can be downloaded from www.mikekamuf.com
- Questions or comments? Please email me at mikekamuf@gmail.com