Beginning Jazz Curriculum and Instruction

A Performance Methods and Materials Project
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Partial Fulfillment of the
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Department of Music

by
Daniel C. Emerson

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Introduction

Jazz education is an integral part of the music curriculum as a whole. Jazz ensemble provides opportunities for students to explore creativity (Wisconsin Model Academic Standards for Music A, B, C, and D) in diverse musical styles. It is its own distinct art form and should be included as a course or extra-curricular course for this reason. Jazz music reflects the time period in which it was written and performed, allowing instructors to easily include lessons on jazz history and American history (Wisconsin Standards H and I). Additionally, the almost universal availability of recordings of jazz works that include the composer performing allows both students and teacher to hear the composer’s original intent. Listening, analyzing, and imitating are key components in jazz performance and are transferrable skills to other areas of music (Wisconsin Standards F and G). The amount of quality literature, history, and resources available make jazz ensemble a logical part of any quality music program.

Teaching a jazz ensemble is often an expectation of instrumental music educators in public and private school band programs either as a curricular course or as an extra-curricular activity. However, many times this is simply an afterthought of the people hiring for the positions as well as for the educators expected to teach the subject. Also, many music educators are simply not trained in this field. In addition to not being trained in jazz pedagogy, many instrumental music educators have not had experience performing in jazz ensembles if they don’t play one of the traditional big band instruments. Jazz pedagogy, jazz improvisation, and jazz history are not requirements for most students obtaining an instrumental music degree. While many
students might have taken a jazz history course, or participated in a jazz ensemble, or combo in college, many students like myself did not. Only once I began my teaching career did I realize how truly unprepared I was to teach a jazz ensemble.

Under the direction of non-jazz educators, middle school jazz ensembles have a tendency to perform more rock and pop tunes than standard jazz literature. This can happen when teachers think students would be more interested in playing pop tunes, or when the teachers find it too daunting to teach improvisation, quality jazz literature, jazz theory, history, and its relation to other art forms. This project was created to be a quick, easy, effective resource for elementary, middle school, and junior high jazz directors.

Another common failing of this modified version of a jazz band is that soloists are provided with a written out “suggested” part, which unfortunately removes the most important element of jazz music: improvisation in rehearsal and performance. When students are not taught how to improvise using appropriate rhythms, articulations, and pitches there is limited room for creativity or self-expression in rehearsal. Jazz groups based largely around tunes without improvisation do not set the students up to become life-long learners or consumers of jazz music.

There are a few texts on teaching jazz available as resources. Teaching Music Through Performance in Jazz by Richard Miles and Ronald Carter is the latest quality text published to help the jazz educator including: suggestions for teaching a multi-cultural approach to jazz education, rehearsal techniques, rhythm section, and promoting a high school jazz ensemble. This text also contains teacher guides to over
65 jazz charts in three categories: developing, intermediate, and advanced. The developing section includes charts at grade 2 and higher. While this text provides a vast amount of knowledge, many of the sections very quickly move beyond what a middle school director could use in rehearsal. The teacher guides are excellent if you have a band capable of playing the charts listed at that difficulty level, but they don’t do much for middle school ensembles playing from a grade ½ through 2.

There have been many jazz method books released in the last decade. *Essential Elements Jazz* by Michael Sweeney is a method book designed for group and individual beginning jazz instruction. The vocalization syllables used by Michael Sweeney in *Essential Elements Jazz* are user friendly, and stylistically appropriate. This method book also provides additional pages specifically for rhythm section techniques on individual instruments. For very beginning ensembles, *Essential Elements Jazz* provides challenges very early in the book for piano (2 hand chords), bass (walking bass lines), and extended ranges on brass instruments. There are multiple method books, and vocalization techniques available; directors can review them to find the method that will work best for their program. Even with all the progress made in jazz method books, most texts are still more suitable for older students, and are too advanced for middle school jazz ensembles. The following curriculum, syllabus, lesson plans, and appendices have been compiled as a reference for the middle school / junior high band director to be successful in teaching the language of jazz and improvisation.
Chapter 1:  
Beginning Jazz Curriculum

**Motivation**

Jazz is an integral part of the music curriculum as a whole. Jazz study provides opportunities for students to explore creativity in more diverse musical styles. Jazz ensemble should fit into the larger goal / mission of the music department by helping create a love for the arts and a proficiency level for students to be able to participate in the arts in some form after high school (e.g., community band / orchestra, church music, college ensembles).

The following Beginning Jazz Curriculum reflects the Wisconsin’s Model Academic Standards for Music and shows how a jazz curriculum could fulfill the various standards. The curriculum contains several parts including: memorization of scales appropriate for jazz performance, gaining familiarity with the style using instruments and voice, development of improvisation and composition skills, reading and notation, analysis and evaluation skills, and connection to arts, history, and culture. Following the curriculum components, a syllabus and lesson plans will detail the acquisition of these skills and abilities.
Curriculum for Grade Six Through Eight

Scales for memorization

According to grade level, students will perform from memory:

6th

1. Concert Bb, Eb, and F major scales
2. Concert Bb, Eb, and F Major pentatonic scales
(Drums) - basic swing, rock, and bossa nova styles with high-hat, snare, and ride cymbal

7th

1. Concert Bb, Eb, F, and C major
2. Concert Bb, Eb, and F major blues
(Drums) - Basic swing with comping snare, shuffle, bossa nova, and rock

8th

1. Concert Bb, Eb, F, C, and Ab major
2. Concert Bb, and F minor blues
3. Concert Bb, F, Eb mixolydian, and dorian
(Drums) - swing with comping snare and bass, shuffle, bossa nova, rock, and basic swing brush technique
Content Standard A: Singing

Content Standard B: Instrumental

Music students will sing and play instruments, alone and with others, using a varied repertoire of music.

According to grade level, students will:

6th

1. Sing simple jazz melodies alone and in a group
2. Perform a piece of appropriate grade level on an instrument using correct technique (good posture, breath support, and characteristic tone)
3. Play by ear simple melodies on instrument (C Jam Blues)

7th

1. Sing jazz melodies and chord tones alone and in a group
2. Perform a piece of appropriate grade level on an instrument using correct technique
3. Play by ear short melodies on instrument
8th

1. Sing jazz melodies and chord tones alone and in a group

2. Perform a piece of appropriate grade level on an instrument using correct technique

3. Play by ear melodies on instrument
Content Standard C: Improvisation

Content Standard D: Composition

Improvising and Composing: Music programs provide opportunities for children to learn to improvise, compose, and arrange music.

According to grade level, the student will:

6th

1. Improvise short rhythmic solos with consistent style, meter, and tone
2. Improvise short melodies on given blues, and major scales
3. Compose short pieces within specific guidelines
4. Arrange short simple pieces for jazz combo

7th

1. Improvise extended rhythmic and melodic solos on given pentatonic, blues, major, and minor keys in a consistent style, and meter
2. Compose short pieces within specific guidelines
3. Arrange short pieces for jazz combo
1. Improvise extended rhythmically complex solos in a consistent style and meter

2. Improvise extended melodies over given chord progressions in multiple styles and keys

3. Compose short pieces for two or more melodic voices
Content Standard E: Reading and Notating

Music programs provide instruction in the skills of reading and writing musical notation.

According to grade level, the student will:

6th

1. Read and interpret music in different styles (swing vs. straight eighths), and keys, and meter
2. Perform through #45 in Essential Elements Jazz with correct rhythms, pitches, and style (articulations, dynamics)

7th

1. Read and interpret music in different styles including swing, ballads, Latin, and rock
2. Perform through #82 in Essential Elements Jazz with correct rhythms, pitches, and style
3. Transcribe and perform a given short and simple solo passage
1. Read and interpret music in different styles and meters. Including; 3/4, and 6/8

2. Perform through #120 in *Essential Elements jazz*

3. Transcribe and perform a given solo passage
Content Standard F: Analysis

Content Standard G: Evaluation

Analyzing and Evaluating: Music programs provide opportunities for students to listen to, analyze, describe and evaluate music and musical performances

According to grade level, the student will:

6th

1. Listen to music of multiple styles and use music vocabulary to evaluate performers
2. Recognize and identify basic musical forms (e.g. 12 bar blues, AABA), key, and meter
3. Analyze basic scale structure of major and pentatonic scales

7th

1. Listen to music of multiple styles and use music vocabulary to evaluate performers
2. Recognize and identify basic musical forms (AABA, 12 bar Blues, etc.), key, and meter
3. Recognize and identify intervals and basic chord structure
1. Listen to music of multiple styles. Evaluate performers and analyze form, and meter
2. Recognize and identify musical forms, key, and meter
3. Recognize and identify intervals and chord structure
Content Standard H: The Arts

Content Standard I: History and Culture

Students will relate music to the arts, history, and culture

According to grade level, the student will:

6th

1. Relate pieces and artists to their historical, cultural, and artistic period
2. Compare stylistically similar pieces of music and visual art
3. Complete online lessons and activities incorporating history, culture, and artists

7th

1. Relate pieces and artists to their historical period
2. Classify by style a number of characteristic jazz works, and explain the basic characteristics of the style
3. Complete online lessons and activities incorporating history, culture, and artists
4. Compare stylistically similar pieces of music and visual art
1. Relate pieces and artists to their historical, cultural, and artistic period

2. Classify by genre and style a number of characteristic jazz works, and explain the characteristics of the genre / style

3. Create improvisations and compositions inspired by visual art

4. Compare stylistically similar pieces of music and visual art
Sample Syllabus

Course Description

Jazz band is available to select 7th and 8th graders chosen by audition. Jazz band will meet Tuesday and Thursday mornings from 7:00am - 7:45am. For updated rehearsal schedules go to the Marshall Band Website and click on the Jazz tab.

www.band.marshallmiddleschool.net

Goals

1. To introduce students to the language and history of jazz.
2. To develop student’s skill in improvisation.
3. To increase knowledge of jazz as an art form.
4. To create, perform, and listen to quality music in multiple styles.

This course is designed for the instrumental musician who wishes to explore the world of jazz music and improvisation. Students will perform in combos and big band. Students must be enrolled in Concert Band or Orchestra (bass) to be eligible for Jazz Ensemble. In order to participate, a student must audition demonstrating a proficiency level that would enable that student to be a contributing member of the ensemble.
Attendance

Students must attend all rehearsals and sectionals. All absences must be reported to Mr. Emerson with an email or phone call. Two unexcused absences from rehearsal or sectionals may be grounds for removal from the group.

Rehearsal Behavior

Students are expected to exhibit positive rehearsal behavior, which includes:

1. Listening (no talking) when the Director or another student is talking / playing.
2. Proper posture
3. Absolutely no put downs or negative behavior. This class will often require students to be in solo and small group settings. It is imperative that there is a positive, encouraging atmosphere.

Student Projects / Assignments

Quarter 1

1. Students will be able to perform Happy Birthday in concert F - learned by ear.
2. Each student will complete the online lesson for Louis Armstrong at
   www.jalc.org/jazzEd/j4yp_curr/contentsPage.html (7th grade) or
   www.smithsonianjazz.org/class/armstong/la_match.asp (8th grade) completing the match game worksheet.
Quarter 2

1. Transcription - Each student will transcribe and perform from memory the melody to C Jam Blues using Finale NotePad or NoteFlight. (Lesson Plan 1 p. 24)

2. Improvisation - Each student will improvise 8 measures in Concert Bb to Jamey Aebersold recording.

3. Online Lesson - Each student will complete the online lessons on the Blues at www.jalc.org/jazzED/j4yp_curr/contentsPage.html (7th grade) or (8th grade) Duke Ellington at www.smithsonianjazz.org and complete the match game and Duke’s music activities.

Quarter 3

1. Bb blues - Each student will compose a melody over the Bb blues progression emulating Duke Ellington’s “C Jam Blues”. Each composition will be performed for the class. (Lesson Plan 2 p.28)

2. Online lesson - Each student will complete the online lesson (7th grade) The Big Band Express at www.jalc.org/jazzED/j4yp_curr/contentsPage.html or (8th grade) Activity #2 from the online lesson The Jazz Age and Swing Era at www.neajazzinthescchools.org
Quarter 4

1. Composition - Each student will compose a 4 measure melody over the first or third line of a 12 bar Blues. Students will then pair up and create a composition by combining their shorter melodies in AAB Blues lyric form. Compositions will be performed in class. (Lesson Plan 3 p.32)

2. Online lesson - each student will complete the online lesson (7th grade) Improvisation at www.jalc.org/jazzED/j4yp_curr/contentsPage.html or (8th grade) Thelonious Monk at the same site.

Websites

The following websites will be used during class and may be used for many projects and references. All of these sites are definitely worth exploring. There is a lot of great jazz information and listening on these sites.

www.jalc.org

Check out the free radio broadcasts and podcasts for download

www.jalc.org/jazzED/j4yp_curr/contentsPage.html

Online lessons
www.smithsonianjazz.org

Information on jazz, lessons on Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, and more

www.jazzinamerica.com

The Thelonious Monk Institute

www.allaboutjazz.com

Site contains CD reviews, artist interviews, and current jazz news. Also **free MP3 downloads** each day

www.neajazzintheschools.org

Lessons and information including: pictures, recordings, and much more.

www.pbs.org/jazz/

Information on everything jazz

www.downbeat.com/

The definitive monthly jazz publication – online
Music Notation Software

http://www.noteflight.com/

Online free music notation software

http://www.finalemusic.com/products/finale-notepad/

Finale Notepad – Music notation software. A Free Dowloaad

Suggested Big Band Literature

The following list is a sampling of music intended to challenge students and provide them the opportunity for a true aesthetic experience - a well-rounded experience that is demanding and grounded in the classics of jazz literature.

Swing / Standards -

- Hal Leonard - Discovery Jazz

  A String of Pearls
  Blues Machine
  April in Paris
  Moten Swing

- Hal Leonard - Easy Jazz selections

  All of Me
  Freddie Freeloaer
  Tuxedo Junction
  Blue Train
  St. Louis Blues
  Fly Me to the Moon
  Route 66
- **Essential Ellements selections**
  
  So What
  
  Satin Doll

- **WB First Year selections**
  
  It Don’t Have a Thing (if it Ain’t Got That Swing)
  
  One O’Clock Jump

**Ballad:**

Georgia On My Mind - H.L.

Discovery Jazz

In a Sentimental Mood - H.L.

Easy Jazz

When I Fall In Love - H.L. Easy Jazz

Misty - W.B. Young Jazz

Round’ Midnight - W.B.

**Latin -**

Tangerine - H.L. - Discovery Jazz

The Girl from Ipanema - H.L. Easy Jazz

On Green Dolphin St. - W.B. Young Jazz

**Rock / Funk -**

Chameleon - H.L. Young Jazz

Green Onions - H.L. Young Jazz

Saxes with Attitude - H.L. Young Jazz

Where It’s At - Birch Island Music
Suggested Small Group Literature

“The Real Easy Book” - Sher Music Co.

“Essential Elements - Jazz Standards” - Hal Leonard

Jamey Aebersold - Vol. 1 and Vol. 24

Supplemental Materials

“Drumset Independence and Syncopation” By Dave Black - Alfred Music

“Walking Bassics” By Ed Fuqua and Chuck Sher – Sher Music Co.

“Voicings for Jazz Keyboard” By Frank Mantooth – Hal Leonard

“Groove Essentials 1.0/2.0” By Tommy Igoe – Hudson Music

“Essentials of the Jazz Language for the Developing Improviser” By Jerry Coker – Alfred Music

“Salsa Guidebook: for Piano and Ensemble” By Rebecca Mauleon – Sher Music Co.
Lesson Plan 1: Transcription

Overview

This lesson involves transcribing "C Jam Blues" by Duke Ellington

Learners

This lesson is designed for:
Middle School Jazz Band students

Objectives

After the completion of this lesson, learners will be able to:
Learn by ear a simple melody, and transcribe it
Notate the correct pitches and rhythms into a NoteFlight or NotePad document
Add accents to a NoteFlight or NotePad document

Standards

This lesson addresses the following Wisconsin Model Academic Standards for Music:
A.8.9, B.8.11, C.8.7, E.8.12, F.8.8, F.8.10
Materials

Materials required for this lesson include:

A recording of "C Jam Blues" in concert Bb (Essential Elements – Jazz Standards, Hal Leonard)

Staff paper

Instrument

A copy of C Jam Blues template

A Mac or PC with NotePad, or Internet connection for NoteFlight

Procedure

Day 1

(Note - prior to this lesson students would have practiced ear-training exercises including pitch and melodic dictation in preparation for this exercise)

1. Discuss the definition of Transcription.
   - Review the process of learning Happy Birthday by ear earlier in the year.

2. Play improvising and listening games
   - "Repeat" (play back what I play) using Concert Bb major pentatonic
   - Have students lead "repeat"
   - "Add on" have students remember what came before them and add a measure
   - Have students practice transcribing simple melodies (melodic dictation) 2 measures in length
Day 2

1. Provide students with a recording and printed out template (Chord changes and some measures) of "C Jam Blues"

2. Listen to the head of "C Jam Blues" in class
   - Demonstrate the process for figuring out the notes. (Trial and error, Sing then play)

3. Assign the project for the next class

4. Students should complete the NotePad or NoteFlight document with their transcription.
   - Make sure to add your name to the paper, and save as (joshb2).

   Note:(NoteFlight will automatically save all work.)

5. Students will perform "C Jam Blues"

6. Turn in a copy of your transcription

Evaluation

Students will be evaluated based on the completion of the NotePad / NoteFlight document. Points will be awarded for using the correct pitches, and rhythms.

- 10 points for all notes correct
- 9 points for 1-4 errors
- 7 points for 5-8 errors
Discussion / Extension

1. Discuss transcription, and its relevance to Jazz. (Understanding the language)

2. Encourage students to play something by ear every day.

3. Students will use their NotePad / NoteFlight Transcription of "C Jam Blues" to create their own composition emulating Duke Ellington.
Lesson Plan 2: Composition

Emulation of Ellington's "C Jam Blues"

Overview

This lesson involves a composing a blues melody emulating Duke Ellington's "C Jam Blues"

Learners

This lesson is designed for:

Middle School Jazz Band students

Objectives

After the completion of this lesson, learners will be able to:

Emulate Duke Ellington's style

Alter pitches and key signatures using the keypad

Standards

This lesson addresses the following Wisconsin Model Academic Standards for Music:

B.8.8, C.8.7, D.8.8, E.8.12, F.8.10
Materials

Materials required for this lesson include:

A copy of their transcription "C Jam Blues" both on paper and NotePad / NoteFlight

Instrument

A Mac or PC with NotePad or connection to the internet for NoteFlight

Procedure

Day 1

1. Discuss the technique Ellington uses in "C Jam Blues"
   - Simplicity! - Only two notes for the whole melody
   - Space - No need to fill every second of space with a note

2. Play "C Jam Blues" as a class
   - Have students improvise using the same rhythm but changing the pitches. (Bb minor blues scale) - SIMPLICITY! Try to use as few notes as possible

Day 2: Computer Lab

1. Have students open their transcription of "C Jam Blues"
   - Demonstrate my version of "C Jam Blues"("Jam It Blues") with different pitches
   - Demonstrate how to change pitches using the simple entry tool and arrow keys
     i) On Finale NotePad (Assignment to be completed in class)
(1) Click the eighth note value in the simple entry tool.

(2) Click on the first note of the piece.

(3) Use the up or down arrows to move the notes.

(4) Use the - key to change the note to a flat, and + add a sharp to fit the blues scale.

(5) Using the text edit tool in NotePad add your own title, and name as composer.
   
   (a) If using NotePad Click Save As under the file menu, and rename your piece. Remember: NoteFlight will automatically save your project.

(6) Print

**Evaluation**

Students will be evaluated based on the completion of the NotePad / NoteFlight document. Points will be awarded for following the correct rhythms, and selecting appropriate notes.

1. 10 points for using correct notes from the blues scale and following the rhythm

2. 9 points for 1-2 wrong notes or rhythms

3. 8 points for 3-4 wrong notes or rhythms

**Discussion / Extension**

1. Have students compose their own piece emulating Ellington, but using their own
rhythmic ideas and pitches. Emphasis should be placed on keeping the composition simple, and using space.

2. Try to incorporate this simplicity into improvisations and improvisation games.
Lesson Plan 3: Blues Composition

Overview

This lesson involves a composing a melody over the first or last 4 measures of a Bb blues progression and combining it with another student’s composition to form a blues lyric form melody.

Learners

This lesson is designed for:

Middle School Jazz Band students

Objectives

After the completion of this lesson, learners will be able to:

Compose a simple 4 measure melody using the blues scale
Add accents and slurs to their composition

Standards

This lesson addresses the following Wisconsin Model Academic Standards for Music:

B.8.8, D.8.8, E.8.12, F.8.8, F.8.10, G.8.6
Materials

Materials required for this lesson include:

A copy of the Bb blues progression

A copy of, or knowledge of the Bb blues scale

A Mac or PC with NotePad or Internet connection for NoteFlight

Procedure

Day 1

(Note: students will have already spent time improvising using the Bb Major blues scale)

1. Discuss our original composition emulating Duke Ellington's "C Jam Blues"
   • Use of space and simplicity

2. Review Blues Scale - Improvise over the blues progression.

Day 2

1. Using a smart board or projector to demonstrate composing one line of blues melody.

2. Demonstrate highlight and drag copying, and copy and paste.

3. Dividing the class in half, assign students to compose over the first or last line.

4. On computers have students compose their melodies over the Bb blues template.
5. Save your work to your Gmail drive, or NoteFlight will automatically save your work.

6. Pair up with someone who composed over the other line (should play instrument in the same key).

7. Open both projects on the same computer.

8. In Finale NotePad - Using the Selection Tool (main tool palette) highlight the first line composition and drag it to fill the next 4 measures.

9. Bring up the third line composition. Highlight the 4 measure composition using the Selection Tool. Under Edit, choose Copy. Click on the first line composition project. Highlight the last 4 measures using the Selection Tool. Click Paste under the edit menu.

10. All three lines should now be filled in!

11. Add a title, and composer's names.

12. Play your work. If using Finale NotePad - Save to your Gmail Drive or Flash Drive. NoteFlight will automatically save your project.

**Evaluation**

Students will be evaluated based on the completion of the NotePad / NoteFlight document. Points will be awarded for using the correct pitches, and form.

- 10 points for using correct notes, and form
- 9 points for 1 - 2 incorrect notes
- 8 points for 3 - 4 incorrect notes, etc.
Discussion / Extension

1. Have students perform their compositions for the class the following week.

2. Have students pair up with another student, and combine their A and B compositions to create new compositions. Have volunteers perform for the class.

3. Have students complete their own compositions composing the other line themselves.
Chapter 3:
Beginning Rhythm Section

The rhythm section is often the most challenging aspect of a beginning jazz ensemble. The written piano, bass, and drum parts are often at a more advanced level than the horn parts. Rhythm section members also have the additional challenge of each playing a different instrument and having to come together to create one cohesive sound.

The rhythm section is comprised of totally different instruments that must come together with the same concept and precision. So goes the ‘time feel’ and ‘groove’ in the rhythm section, so goes the ‘time feel’ and ‘groove’ with the rest of the band.1

In most beginning jazz charts the rhythm section parts are fully written out. This doesn’t mean that students should wait until high school to begin learning advanced techniques of comping rhythms, walking bass lines, piano and guitar voicings, and drum fills. Many of these techniques can and should be developed in the blues warm-ups, sectionals, combos, and lessons.

The rhythm section, and in particular the drummer, is not solely responsible for keeping time. The whole band is responsible for keeping time. The rhythm section simply provides an accompaniment for the band. A rhythm section that can keep great time and feel can make the band’s job much easier. However, a bad rhythm

1 (Widner, 2012)
section can really wreck the band’s swing feel and make rehearsals / performances extremely frustrating.

Middle school bands can perform without rhythm sections to great success! The time feel will usually improve when the weak rhythm section is removed. It is also ok to be flexible with the rhythm section parts and instrumentation depending on the abilities of section members. Simplifying difficult sections, or removing a weak player can drastically improve the sound and feel of a piece.

When putting together middle school rhythm sections the most important piece of the puzzle is a strong bassist. If a strong bass player is not available a keyboardist may perform bass lines on a synthesizer / keyboard. While this is not ideal, it is a key element in keeping good time feel, and also providing the harmonic foundation. Having a strong bass line will also provide accompaniment during solo sections where middle school students tend to get very nervous. Without a bass your band will sound much weaker and will not have a strong foundation to build on. This would be a similar effect to a concert band without any bass voices (Tuba, Bari Sax, Bass Clarinet, Bassoon, etc.)

**Piano**

Many piano parts in beginning jazz charts are written with the right hand playing chord voicings and the left hand doubling the bass line. When you have a competent bassist the pianist should omit the left hand. For a pianist to be capable of playing beginning jazz charts they will have needed private piano lessons for many years.
Below are a few tips that will help the young pianist be successful in warm-ups, combo settings, or any sections where voicings are not given.

1. Keep voicings simple. Comping with just 3rds and 7ths is a great place to start.

2. Keep rhythms simple. The following are two examples to start with. Have students use one rhythm only during warm-ups until they are comfortable with it. Once they can perform each rhythm with proper articulation and style they should incorporate both rhythms in their comping. Students who are comfortable with these rhythms may begin incorporating additional rhythms.

3. Provide a chord-voicing syllabus for students. More advanced students can write out their own voicings starting with simple voicings using only the 3rd and 7th.
Drums

Beginning drum set players are very excited to start hitting all of the drums and cymbals. Having a full drum set with bass, snare, 3 toms, hi-hat, ride, and crash cymbals causes young players to get overwhelmed and over-excited when learning to play the set. Some more coordinated students, or students who have taken private lessons will progress very quickly, or may not need any of the steps below.

Many times directors and students misunderstand the role of the drums in the big band. Most students and many directors believe the drums keep time for the band. This is not the case. Responsibility falls on the entire group to keep time. The drums played poorly can cause the group to struggle keeping time, but that does not make the drums responsible to keep time. The guitar and bass play a more prominent role in setting the time and feel with their quarter note pulses. The drummers should hear and feel the ride cymbal following / playing the bass part. When the guitar, bass, and drums are all hearing and feeling the quarter note pulse together the rhythm section will be grooving.

Students should make a habit of practicing with a metronome, and also playing along with recordings to practice keeping good time. Also, remind young percussionists to wear hearing protection while practicing the drum set. A great resource of exercises for beginning through advanced drummers working on consistent time feel with limb independence is *Drumset Independence and Syncopation* by Dave Black – Alfred Music.
Roles of the individual instruments of the drum set:

Ride Cymbal – The ride cymbal plays predominantly quarter notes along with triplet subdivisions commonly occurring on beats 2 and 4. “It is crucial that the drummer hears this as triplets, not sixteenths (a common misconception is a dotted eighth followed by a sixteenth).” An easy way to vocalize this feeling is the Carl Allen Ride Pattern:

\[
\begin{align*}
\mid & \mid & \mid & \mid & / & \mid & \mid & \mid & \\
\text{spang, spang, spang, spang a} & / & \text{lang, spang, spang, spang a} \\
\text{or} & \\
\mid & \mid & \mid & \mid & / & \mid & \mid & \mid & \\
\text{spang, spang a, lang, spang a} & / & \text{lang, spang a, lang, spang a}
\end{align*}
\]

Hi-Hat – The hi-hat should be played on beats 2 and 4 in a swing feel. It should produce a Chomp sound. To produce this sound students should press firmly on the ball of the foot. If your hi-hat is not producing the correct sound make sure the bottom cymbal is tilted slightly.

\(^2\) (Carter, et al. 2008) p. 51
\(^3\) Ibid. p. 22
\(^4\) Ibid. p. 51
Snare Drum – The snare drum’s job is to comp, fill, and accentuate solo wind parts.

“More advanced drummers learn to feather parts of the triplet with the left hand on the snare when developing comping patterns and fills.”

Bass Drum – The bass drum can have two different roles in the drum set.

1. Once students have developed enough limb independence it can be used occasionally as an accent.

2. Students can feather the bass drum to amplify the bass line. This is a difficult technique for the young musician and will require practice to produce an appropriate sound. To accomplish this the bass drum must be played very lightly without producing extra strokes, or holding the beater on the drum. It is essential that the bass drum be not louder than the actual bass line. A good way to explain it to your young drummer is; the bass drum should be felt, not heard when played correctly.

Tom-toms / Floor Tom / Crash Cymbal - These instruments are generally used to perform fills, and add accents. When working with beginning students do not include these instruments. Once students a have a mastery of basic techniques (limb independence, basic rhythmic improvisation, and basic swing rhythm pattern) these instruments may be introduced to provide more tonal options when performing fills. If a chart calls specifically for these instruments it would be acceptable to include them if the student has the ability to perform the part.

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5 Ibid. p. 51
Following are some simple steps to help your beginning drummer progress quickly and produce a good time feel.

1. Start beginning drum set players with only a ride cymbal and hi-hat.
2. Have the student play quarter notes on the ride, and the up beats of 2 and 4 on the hi-hat.
3. Once the students can successfully perform the hi-hat, and quarter note ride part they are ready to add the triplet subdivisions on the ride cymbal as previously noted.

**Performance Tips**

1. The right hand stick should be held using a fulcrum grip. The stick should travel a large distance (approx. 12”) to strike the cymbal. (This will produce a strong, confident attack)
2. The hi-hat should produce a *chomp* sound. Make sure the bottom cymbal is tilted slightly to produce this sound.
3. Add the snare drum lightly on all four beats. If students have difficulty adding this have them practice only the hi-hat and snare. Then have them practice only the ride and snare. Then combine all three parts.
4. Have students practice *feathering* the bass drum with a metronome. Once they have achieved a quality sound on the bass drum they should add the hi-hat.

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6 (Carter, et al. 2008) p. 51
Young students often struggle with this. They have difficulty playing softly with the right foot, and producing a strong sound on the hi-hat.

5. Once students have mastered the bass and hi-hat they should incorporate the ride cymbal, and eventually the snare drum. (This is the base swing pattern, and the first pattern in the book *Drumset Independence and Syncopation* by Dave Black.)

**Bass**

Most beginning jazz literature has the bass part written out. If charts with only chord changes are given your bassist might begin by playing only the root of the chords. Their long-term goal will be playing complete walking bass lines. Below are four basic steps that will help your young bassist sound confident, and keep the band grooving when having to play the changes. Throughout each of the steps it is important to focus on a great sound and time feel.

Harmonically, the bass is the most important instrument in the entire ensemble because it plays the fundamental pitch on which all chords are based and to which all instruments tune. If the bass is out of tune, so is the band; if the bass changes the fundamental pitch, then the chord is changed. It is important, therefore, the bassist not be in denial of his job – playing roots and fifths in the lower register the majority of the time is *his job.***

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7 (Carter, et al. 2008) p. 50
One tip to help your upright bass player at every level is to keep the volume low on the amp. Make sure students keep the left hand strong and pull on the strings with the right hand. This simple technique will help produce a great sound.

Following is a progression of seven steps working towards creating walking bass lines. For each set of chord changes, bass players should practice each step until mastered.

**Beginning Bass**

Step 1. The bass player should play only the root of each chord. Students should play steady, heavy quarter notes on each beat of the measure. Students should think of vocalizing the sound as “dune, dune, dune, dune,” etc. This sound provides a strong attack with a sustained tone.

Step 2. Students will add the 5th of the chord to each measure. Play the root on beats one and two the fifth on beats three and four.

Step 3. Add the third of the chord to each measure. Students will now play Root, Third, Fifth, Fifth in each measure.

Step 4. Add the 7th to beat four of each measure. Students will now play the full chord in an arpeggio. Each measure will now be Root, Third, Fifth, Seventh. This is written out on the bass part of the Bb blues in Appendix A. While this step will not create an ideal bass line it is an important step for students to understand chord tones.
Once students are able to perform arpeggiated bass lines without writing out the notes, and have a working knowledge of their major scales they may begin the progression towards creating walking bass lines.

**Intermediate Bass**

Step 5. This is the first step in producing a walking bass line with smooth linear voice leading. Students should play the root on the first three beats of each measure followed by a note on beat four, which leads into the next chord. This note could either be the leading tone (i.e., the major 7th; a 1/2 step below the root) or other neighboring tone (most likely the 9th of the following measure; a whole step above the root). This step requires students to have a working knowledge of their major scales to determine the leading tone or 9th in the scale.

Step 6. Once students have a mastery of playing a neighboring tone leading into the next measure they can begin adding a note on beat three, which leads to the neighboring tone on beat four.

Step 7. “The final step is to play a root on the downbeat, and a mixture of notes from the scale that corresponds to the chord and chromatic passing notes on beats two, three, and four”

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8 (Lewis, 2006) p.44
Guitar

Similar to the pianist, the guitarist must be at an appropriate performance level to participate in jazz ensemble. Due to the complexities of the instrument, and the difficult writing for guitar, students will need to have a solid foundation from studying privately. Guitarists should be comfortable reading basic major, minor, and 7th chords, and the ability to read music notation for melody lines, and other parts written out. Jazz ensemble charts do not come in tabs. Students should also be able to perform multiple major and minor scales.

Unfortunately, many guitar teachers take the instant gratification approach with their students and teach only tabs, or playing by rote. If students are comfortable with chords, scales, and have good technique I will work with them on reading music notation since a majority of their charts will be reading chord changes.

Below are a few tips for working with guitarists in your rhythm section.

1. The guitar should produce a short, even, percussive – chunk⁹ sound on each beat of the measure. Using quick down strokes on every beat produces this sound. Producing this sound evenly on each beat will help create great time feel in your rhythm section, and band.

2. To achieve the desired percussive sound on the guitar students can and should mute a majority of the strings. This will create a more percussive sound all the strings in the chord voicing were allowed to fully vibrate.

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⁹ (Carter, et al. 2008) p.49
The more strings are muted, the better the percussive effect. However, the guitar is still providing a harmonic purpose; somehow, the guitar should still create the sound of the chord progression. By playing the voice leading, or third or seventh of the chords, the guitar will still display harmonic movement. The challenge in muting requires that the third or seventh sound on one string (generally the fourth string), while the other strings are muted.10

3. The beginning should begin with voicings utilizing the 3rd and 7th of the chords. (Appendix A p.67) This will provide the harmonic information and linear motion with proper voice leading.

4. Students should add three and four note voicings as they become comfortable with two note voicings. This will allow students the ability to play limited voices with muted strings or full chords depending on the style and sound desired.

10 (Carter, et al. 2008) p.49
Chapter 4:

Improvisation Ideas and Techniques

Improvisation is the crux of the problem for many students and directors. The word alone is enough to make many people of all ages quiver with fear. The thought of putting your musical thoughts straight from your brain to the bell of your horn without a filter can be terrifying. If we start students early and continue to praise and encourage them they will understand the joy of improvisation.

Most people don’t understand how important improvisation is to their everyday lives, and how much they already improvise. It isn’t as scary as they think if you break it down for students. Improvisation is everywhere in life. Wynton Marsalis puts it best.

> You know, you don’t have to create the Sistine Chapel; but let’s concentrate on developing our solos and understanding the value of improvisation. How many times in the lives of our students are they going to be called upon to improvise? It might just be the basic improvisation in the kitchen, or it could be some serious personal crisis. But the art of improvisation and fat of improvisation is something that is essential to living a confident, modern life. That’s why it’s very, very important: soloing and improvisation.¹¹

Start students off without instruments for a quick example. Conversations are improvisations. Ask a student; how is your day going so far? What was the best part of their day? Their answers will be a cohesive response to your questions. They have just improvised. Their responses were not preplanned or written down for them.

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They listened to the question and responded. Musical improvisation is simply replying to questions in the language of music. The goal of each improviser is to create a cohesive story that makes sense in the context of the chart.

Students can learn to speak this language, but just like learning to speak a language it does not happen over night, or in a year. With practice and encouragement students can quickly become fluent at a basic level, and continue adding to their vocabulary each and every day.

Directors unfamiliar with jazz improvisation might tell students that people who improvise just do it by ear and the teacher doesn’t give the students any other direction. Some teachers will just admit they are not improvisers and therefore don’t teach it. While some people are naturally gifted listeners, improvisation is a learned language. The two most important thoughts for beginning improvisers are: keep it simple, and rhythm is the most important part of the improvisation. Students often feel pressure to play higher, faster, or louder if an older more experienced student next to them played a solo with more notes in it. Trying to play higher, faster, and louder without understanding the changes will only cause problems for the young improviser. Keep It Simple…

There are many tools available to help students learn to improvise. Smart phones allow students to record video and audio of themselves for analysis. Programs like Garage Band allow students to create their own play-along tracks and record their solos over the top. Garage Band can also notate the students improvised solo for analysis. Play-along tracks are another great tool for practicing improvisation. There
are many available. Jamey Aebersold has a seemingly endless amount of play-along books available. The two most helpful at the beginning level are: *Volume 1 How to Play Jazz and Improvise*, and *Volume 24 How to Improvise: Major and Minor.*

Volume 1 provides in depth information on jazz scales, chord progressions, improvisation techniques, and play-along tracks. The two most used play-along tracks for middle school students are the Bb and F Blues. *Essential Elements Play-Along: Jazz Standards* provides accessible arrangements of standard jazz tunes with accompaniments. The play-along tracks include a track with rhythm section and melody, and a track with only rhythm section after the students have listened and learned the head. This book also provides the appropriate scales to use while improvising, and historical information about the piece and composer.

Once students get beyond the beginning stages of improvisation they may begin learning and using modes and blues scales in their improvisations. The first stage of using modes focuses on the three most commonly used chords and modes.

> If we are familiar with scale construction, and can execute them comfortably on our instrument, the only remaining task is to determine which scales go with which chords. Choosing which scale to use is not as big a mystery as one might think.\(^{12}\)

The most commonly used scales in jazz improvisation are major, mixolydian, and dorian. The mixolydian scale contains the same notes as a major scale with the exception of a lowered 7th (\(\text{♭} \ 7\)). The dorian scale contains all the same notes as a

\(^{12}\) (Sorenson, 2006) p. 10
major scale with the exceptions of a lowered 3\textsuperscript{rd} and 7\textsuperscript{th}, (♭3, ♭7). These three scales relate to three forms of a 7\textsuperscript{th} chord: MA7 (major 7\textsuperscript{th}), dominant 7, and mi7 (minor 7\textsuperscript{th}). A BbMA7 chord would correlate with the Bb major scale for improvisation. The Bb7 (dominant 7) chord would correlate with the Bb mixolydian scale, and the Bbmi7 chord would correlate with the Bb dorian scale. Learning these modes will take dedicated individual practice by students. This step cannot be over emphasized when it comes to jazz improvisation. Learning these modes in all 12 keys will take years beyond middle school, but students should start learning these modes as early as possible.

The goal is to make these modes as familiar as major scales are. The big difference in learning scales to use in jazz improvisation is that we want to internalize the scales as deeply as possible, whereas traditional scale practice often emphasizes instrumental technique over scale internalization. Make sure that student practice is focused on memorizing and internalizing the notes of the scales.\textsuperscript{13}

The minor blues scale (1,b3, 4, #4/b5, 5, b7) may be used throughout the 12 bar blues, but can lead to limited melodic possibilities. The major blues scale (1, 2, b3, 3, 5, and 6.) may be learned first as it adds one note to the major pentatonic scale. Using this scale will allow students to utilize and listen to the difference between the major and minor third. A good way to incorporate both blues scales is to use the major blues scale over all of the I7 chords, and the minor blues scale over all other chords in the blues progression.

\textsuperscript{13} (Sorenson, 2006) p. 10
**Games and Ideas for Improvisation**

Start simple; improvise on one pitch only. Have students perform with a great tone, and appropriate jazz articulations, and dynamics. This can be done with a play along track and is also a great approach when learning changes. (Improvise using only the roots of the chords) This can be increased to use two, three, or more notes once students are comfortable creating improvisations on one pitch.

**Simple Songs**

Have students practice learning tunes by ear. Start with simple tunes like “Mary Had a Little Lamb”, or “Ode to Joy”. Increase the difficulty by having them learn them in multiple keys. Then increase the difficulty of the tune to “Happy Birthday” or any other song they know from memory. A key element to this is having the students sing the tune, then play.

**Call and Repeat (telephone)**

This is a great way to get the students listening and imitating solos. Start with very simple one-note improvisations focusing on jazz articulations and common swing rhythms. Once students are successfully repeating simple solos increase the number of notes in the improvisations. The sky is the limit on this exercise when it comes to difficulty. This exercise can be done with play-along tracks in any key.
**Call and Response**

Have students respond with a musical answer to your improvisation. Again, it should start simple, and gradually increase in difficulty. Students and director should strive to play musical phrases using appropriate jazz articulations and dynamics.

**Add On**

One student improvises a simple one-measure melody. The next student in line will copy the first measure and add a second measure of improvisation. This continues until a student cannot recall the earlier improvisations. This exercise should start as one or two note improvisations and gradually increase in difficulty.

**AAB Blues Lyric Form**

Have one student improvise over the first 4 bars of the blues. The second soloist will try to copy that solo over the second 4 bars. The third student in line will improvise a new improvisation over the 3rd four bars completing the AAB form. Students can begin this exercise using only roots of the chords followed by using chord tones, and eventually using the major blues scale. This exercise can also easily lead to student compositions in combo settings.
Chapter 5:

Sample Rehearsal Schedule

Listening Example

Listening is the key element in learning a new language. Allow students to listen to one track during each rehearsal, and discuss / analyze a given component of the recording (timbre, form, instrumentation, improvisations, etc.). You may use a listening guide or questions from a listening guide to help students listen analytically.

Bb Scale

Students warm up by playing the Bb major scale up to the 9th scale degree, and back down. This is done on whole notes, quarter notes, and swing eighth notes. When students reach tonic on the way down this becomes the start of the next scale i.e., when students land on a concert Bb coming down from the whole notes it is played as a quarter note to start the quarter note scale. When students land on tonic after playing the scale on swing eighth notes this begins the Bb blues progression. While the wind, piano, bass, and guitar players are playing the scale the drummer should be playing basic swing time and working on incorporating / refining skills such as: feathering the bass drum, snare comping / fills, etc.
**Bb Blues Progression**

**Rhythm Section**

When the blues progression begins the bass, guitar, and piano will join with the drums to play as a cohesive rhythm section. The piano will comp simple rhythms using the given voicings while the guitar will play quarter note *chunks* using down strokes only with the given voicings. The Bass will play a bass line using the arpeggios given. More or less advanced players may increase or decrease difficulty, e.g., walking bass, or just roots. (See Chapter 3) Rhythm section members should use this time to focus on listening to each other and setting a good time feel. Once all wind players have played their improvised solos the rhythm section members will each have a 4 bar solo. The piano solo will be followed by guitar, bass, and drum solos. After each member of the rhythm section solos they will drop out leaving only the remaining members to play.

**Winds**

The wind players will play one chorus of whole notes on the root of each chord. This will be followed by playing the root and third of each chord on half notes. The third chorus will played as quarter note arpeggios of the 7th chords. If possible the fourth chorus the wind players will play up and down the arpeggios on swing eighth notes with the 7th tied together. After completing these choruses it will be open for solos. Each student in the band will get a 4 bar improvised solo. (Depending on the number of band members this could be extended to a full chorus for each student) Beginning
students will improvise rhythms only using the root of each chord. As students become more comfortable they will use the root and third followed by full arpeggios. Students may begin adding passing tones and extended chord tones using the full mixolydian and dorian scales respectively. Students can also begin using the blues scales over the progression.

**Charts**

It is imperative that students and director understand that rehearsal time is not for practicing individual parts. Rehearsal time is for rehearsing sections of the band and the full group; focusing on balance, blend, matching style and articulations.
Chapter 6:

Sectionals and Combos

Sectionals are a great way to improve your group’s tone, style, improvisations, and time feel. An appropriate amount of time for sectionals is once a week for 45 minutes. Students can be divided into saxophones, trumpets, trombones, and rhythm section. Beginning jazz students are more interested and excited about improvising in small groups of like instruments.

In addition to rehearsing the wind sections, the rhythm section benefits greatly from playing without any horns. The rhythm section can focus on their individual roles in the group, and listening to the other parts of the section. A majority of time spent in rhythm sectionals is playing the Bb blues. Students simply need time playing together, and the blues is a perfect vehicle for it. Students take turns improvising and working on individual techniques and time feel. **Note:** Depending on the proficiency of rhythm section members, students may need to receive individual lessons until they are ready to meet as a section. Many times students take private lessons outside of school, but some start from step one. It is the true beginners that will need to start with private lessons for a month or more until they build the skills and confidence to perform in the section.

There is a noticeable difference in student’s willingness to be creative and confident in the full group setting after spending time learning **how** to improvise and listen in small group sectionals. In fact the majority of sectional time should be devoted to improvisation. This is the time when focus should be on creativity in improvisation.
and the theory behind it. In addition, sectional time is an ideal place for teaching students about form, scales (modes), chord structure, and improvisation.

**Combos**

Combos provide an excellent opportunity for students to focus on their improvisation, and listening skills. The small group setting of a combo demands more from each individual musician that a large group setting. A combo experience provides great opportunities for students to turn their improvisation skills into composition skills as well! The small group setting of a combo demands more from each individual musician that a large group setting.

A few things to remember when working with young combos:

1. Unlike the traditional big band setting, combos can have much more flexible instrumentation that can include instruments not usually associated with jazz music.
2. Your rhythm section will develop a more mature sound. This will have a direct impact on your big band as well.
3. Necessary instruments usually include a bass and piano to provide the foundation and harmonic structure. You *can* have a combo without a drummer. If you don’t have a bassist or pianist you can still have a combo. Using play-along tracks will allow your horn players to continue working on their improvisation skills.
4. Traditionally, combo performances follow this format: Head, Solos, Head. The “head” is the chart. Usually it is written as one chorus, although it is often played
twice at the beginning and end of a performance. This form is similar to sonata allegro form (exposition, development, recapitulation).

5. At the middle school level students should begin with charts featuring easy changes.

6. Most beginning / intermediate level fake books and play-along books contain not only the chart, but also a key with appropriate scales, piano voicings, suggested bass lines, and often historical information about the composer / performer.

7. Students must listen to and emulate the recordings of major jazz artists performing the pieces they are playing. Even though beginning arrangements are often adjusted to be more accessible; the style, articulations, dynamics, and solos are all just as relevant.
Appendix A

Bb Blues progression
Bb Blues

ALTO / BARI SAX

Bb Blues

TENOR SAX / TRUMPET IN Bb
Bb Blues

Trombone / Bass

\[ \begin{array}{c}
    \text{\textbf{Bb Blues}} \\
    \text{Trombone / Bass} \\
    \text{\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{music_notes.png}}
\end{array} \]
Bb Blues
Bb Blues

Guitar - Basic Voicings
Appendix B

Glossary

(Definitions from www.jazzinamerica.org)

**Big Band** - A jazz ensemble of 12 to 20 members, consisting of a rhythm section plus sections of trumpets, trombones and saxophones.

**Blues** – A form of music introduced in the early 20th century derived from the African American work songs as principle source material; the most persistent characteristic form is a 12-measure pattern: three phrases of four measures each; related to the blue notes, i.e., the notes found "between" the keys of the piano; the lowered 3rd, 5th, and 7th notes of a major scale are often referred to as blue notes, having a "bluesy" sound common in blues compositions and performances.

**Changes** - Jazz terminology for chords (e.g., the changes of a tune = the chords of tune); a tune's chord progression.

**Chorus** - One time through the structure (i.e., the entire chord progression) being used to organize the music in a composition; one time through the chords of a tune; one time through the song’s form.

**Combo** – Same as small band or small ensemble (duo to nonet); an assemblage of musicians with a common purpose.

**Comp, Comping** – Rhythmically interesting chording by the keyboardist or guitarist which provides improvised accompaniment for melodies (comes from the words to complement and to accompany).
**Fakebook** – Book containing lead sheets of numerous tunes (see lead sheet).

**Gig** – Synonym for job.

**Head** – The written melody of a tune (previously composed, not improvised), usually played as the first and last chorus in a jazz performance.

**Improvisation** – Spontaneous composition; composing the music as you are playing; extemporaneous soloing; “musical conversing.”

**Jazz** – A music originating in America. Characteristics include syncopation, improvisation, and strong expressions of emotion.

**Lead Sheet** – Sheet of music indicating the basic melody and chord symbols (i.e., head and changes) of an entire tune (e.g., the way each tune is written in the Aebersold play-along books - or any fakebook - is considered a lead sheet)

**Mode** - A particular series of notes that are derived from a "parent" scale beginning and ending with a note other than the parent scale's root, resulting in a different set of intervals and tonal center thus creating a different mood, e.g., the second mode of the Bb major scale (Bb C D Eb F G A Bb) is C Dorian (C D Eb F G A Bb C).
Swing – 1. To swing is when an individual player or ensemble performs in such a rhythmically coordinated way as to command a visceral response from the listener (to cause feet to tap and heads to nod); an irresistible gravitational buoyancy that defies mere verbal definition. 2. A way of performing eighth notes in which downbeats and upbeats receive approximately 2/3 and 1/3 of the beat, respectively, providing a rhythmic lilt to the music. 3. A stylistic term to designate a jazz form that originated in the 1930s with the advent of the big bands (as in Swing Era).

Voicing – The particular order of notes in a chord (e.g., E Bb D G is a 3 b7 9 5 voicing of a C7 chord).
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