

New Styles, New Technologies, New Possibilities in

Jazz

by John Kuzmich, Jr.

Twentieth-century society and technology shape the needs of our students. How can we best meet those needs? John Kuzmich, Jr., director of bands at Evergreen High School in Evergreen, Colorado, and editor of the Jazz Educators Journal, suggests that jazz education may supply the answer.



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Jazz and America have grown up together, experiencing and overcoming difficulties through their developing years. The genius of the jazz art form lies in its incredible diversity and is fueled by the creative power that flows from the melting pot of our country. Jazz is essentially the only indigenous American folk music that has risen to the level of formal artistic expression, receiving international recognition in the process. The recently passed U.S. House of Representatives Concurrent Resolution number fifty-seven designated jazz "as a rare and valuable national American treasure to which we should devote our attention, support and resources." Because of its array of musical styles, jazz has a timeless appeal to people of all ages and to current and future generations. From the humble, energetic roots of blues, Dixieland, and ragtime, jazz has grown to achieve worldwide acceptance and has influenced the creative force of art forms around the world.

Jazz is a product of twentieth-century sociological and technological change. No other musical style has been so intricately entwined with and totally reflective of these sweeping social and technological changes. Because of these changes, jazz has become an energetic art form: without the development of the phonograph and radio as media for its dissemination, jazz might have remained a folk-art dance music.¹ The individual nature of jazz has made its development distinct from that of other kinds of music. Jazz requires not only an individual interpretation of melody, it also demands spontaneous individual invention of melody. In addition, it requires an articulation, style, and rhythm that cannot be reduced to notation; it depends on an individual interpretation of the total musical sound that can only be fixed and transmitted

through recordings and radio.

Basically, a classical performer strives to play the way he thinks the composer intended. On the other hand, in a jazz performance, if performers do not include something of themselves, their personalities, and their backgrounds, the audience rightfully feels cheated. In classical music, it is considered that how a work is performed is never as important as the work itself. In jazz, the work itself is never really as important as the way in which it is played. Jazz, then, is not a composer's art; rather, jazz is the art of the performer, the performing ensemble, and the arranger. The quality of the art is dependent upon their creative ideas.²

The emphases on listening and improvisation are the essential ingredients that help to further distinguish jazz instruction from all other music education.

Over the past several decades, music educators have given considerable attention to evaluation of the music curriculum. The role of performance groups has been under particular scrutiny. The concern centers around such fundamental questions as: Are students in band, orchestra, choir, jazz ensemble, or jazz choir actually gaining an understanding of the music they perform? Are they developing concepts of musical style and form, or are they predominantly reading notes mechanically? Jazz educators are confronting these questions with the broadest of curriculum offerings, meeting the creative needs of the individual with improvisation, and keeping in stride with today's technological explosion.

Jazz education today

Enrollments in jazz-related ensembles have increased significantly over the years. According to the booklet *Jazz Education Today*, there were about 5,000 high school jazz ensembles in 1960. In 1970, there were 10,000 jazz groups in

over 8,500 junior and senior high schools. By 1979, it was estimated that there were more than 500,000 students in jazz-related ensembles across the country. In California, a recent study by Lois Harrison found that between 1984 and 1986, jazz bands and jazz choirs had enrollment increases of 6 percent and 26 percent, respectively. During the same period, enrollment in the more traditional large ensembles decreased by more than 50 percent.³

The idea of the all-state jazz ensemble continues to grow. In 1969-70 there were two states with such groups. In 1983, there were fourteen states represented in the movement, and today there are twenty-five states with such groups. These competitive jazz festivals have had a positive impact on the growth of jazz with their recognition of some very good groups and through feedback to the performers from adjudicators' comments.

A 1983 survey by Walter Barr identified seventy colleges that offered jazz majors: today, more than one hundred colleges and universities offer degrees in jazz studies. John Leisenring's 1984 study named forty colleges that offer jazz pedagogy courses for music education majors and at least ten colleges that require a course in jazz pedagogy for graduation as a music education major.⁴

The success of jazz education in the 1980s has helped pave the way for further growth into the 1990s. Lee Bash cited four significant accomplishments in jazz education during the 1980s:

1. It established credibility between jazz educators and professional jazz musicians in that jazz education is now an important force in education today affecting all music educators.

2. Jazz research is becoming more prominent in research jour-

nals and studies. History and education seem to be the areas that excite the greatest interest.

3. Jazz education has broadened its scope to include grades K-12, comprising general music and band, vocal, and string instruction. The big band is no longer the only vehicle for jazz education; combos are being included more frequently in a jazz program.

4. While the training of an abundance of soloists may be an area in jazz education that still needs more development, there are more improvisers with a good understanding of scales, chords, riffs, and so forth than ever before.⁵

Implications

Charles Dickens's description of an era as the best of times and the worst of times fits the present and immediate future of jazz education. While there are many problems facing the teaching profession today, there are just as many new and exciting trends that can have a positive impact on education, particularly jazz education.

In his best-selling book *Mega-trends*, John Naisbitt presented new directions in bridging the gap between yesterday's norms and tomorrow's expectations. He states that we have emerged from a society of "either/or" choices to a "Baskin Robbins" society in which there is an amazing array of new alternatives and freedoms. The traditional pyramidal structure of organization is being modified or replaced by management in which the new leader is a facilitator rather than a giver of orders. A new networking model is offering vast new ways to make contacts, gain information, and get things done. Teachers will need to adapt as the trend toward an information society makes high technology an increasingly important part of the educational process.

When improvisation and listen-

ing are the core of the jazz program, jazz education thrives. Regardless of the ensemble, vocal or instrumental, large or small, improvisation lends itself well to what Naisbitt has identified as a "multiple option" trend, allowing diversity of thought and style, creativity, and individuality.

Ideally, every rehearsal should include about five minutes of listening and five to ten minutes of improvisation instruction. Jazz educators Johnny Rinaldo and James Standifer make regular use of improvisation instruction in large classes and clinics. During the fall season, I regularly warm up my marching band with blues tunes that feature soloists supported by riffs played by the rest of the band—and we use these tunes, often composed as well as improvised by the students, as pep



Photograph courtesy of Georgia State University

songs. Improvisation is a musical experience for every music student, not just for jazz students or the more advanced students of an ensemble. Bob Curnow, NAJE national president, stated in a letter to the author that the future of jazz instruction should not be restricted to small groups:

Jazz groups of all sizes are the perfect musical ensembles for the teaching of life's most valued characteristics: sensitivity to others, the ability to listen, to interact positively with others, to make a creative, personal statement, to develop original thought This is why jazz ensembles of all kinds are the performance groups of the future for music education. In fact, the only thing which has kept this from happening in the past has been the reluctance or bias of individual teachers. Certainly the need has and will always be there to teach those values . . . and the students know that.

College music education programs need to include jazz in their methods classes. This will initiate significant changes in public school teaching, in which teachers have generally been limited to teaching note reading and have not given students the opportunity to experience the more creative aspects of music education: improvisation, arranging, and composing. Jazz education is a logical vehicle for teaching comprehensive musicianship concepts—such as ear training, composing, and style analysis—that are essential ingredients in the development of students' musicality.

Scheduling

Because of the restrictions of the six-period high school day, many students are being afforded fewer choices. Teachers and administrators are often faced with two alternatives: they can allow students to choose among an abundance of jazz courses during the day if those students are not required to partici-

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pate in symphonic band, or they can require students to be in the symphonic band program and restrict jazz ensembles to the status of extracurricular activities.

When schools have the vision to implement more than the traditional six- or seven-period day, student aspirations can be more accurately fulfilled. At New Trier High School in Winnetka, Illinois, just north of Chicago, students are offered a nine-period day in which all courses are taken daily. Many of New Trier's music students take two music classes, choosing among four jazz-band classes, four concert bands, and four orchestras, all of which are offered during the school day. A total of fourteen hundred instrumental and vocal students are enrolled in daily music classes—extracurricular jazz offerings include four combos and a synthesizer ensemble. Donald DeRoche, director of bands at DePaul University, notes that through the entire Chicago north shore area (where seven- to nine-period school days are the norm) high school music programs are not only surviving but are getting better than ever.⁶

Festivals and clinics

The new trend is away from the "winner-take-all" festival. In the Spring 1989 *Jazz Educators Journal*, National Association of Jazz Educators (NAJE) President Bob Curnow stated that "philosophy regarding competitive versus noncompetitive jazz festivals . . . is most often dictated by the local or regional needs and traditions. Although I instinctively rebel against the idea of competition in any of the arts, I understand the value of a rating system to those directors who need to display their value . . . to their administrators."

In recent years, noncompetitive jazz festivals, offering more oppor-

tunities for clinics, have begun to predominate. At the 1988 University of Northern Colorado Greeley Jazz Festival, forty-six out of forty-eight groups requested that ratings be released only for the administration's perusal. The 1989 festival grew to accommodate 140 bands, and 80 percent of those bands asked for this noncompetitive format. The director of the festival, Gene Aitken, thinks that directors like the educational aspects of the noncompetitive festival, and that students listen more freely to other groups if they are not in competition with them. Similar noncompetitive festivals achieving success are the "Tri-C Jazz Fest" at Cuyahoga Community College in Cleveland and the festival at Millikin University in Decatur, Illinois.

At the "Jazz In The Meadows Jazz Festival" in Rolling Meadows, Illinois, there is an open, faculty-run jam session in which a faculty member calls out the tunes and assigns solos to everyone while students from the participating schools jam, or improvise, with one another. Students are waiting in the wings to play—another indication of the growing importance of improvisation for total musicianship.

Another exciting trend is the number of outstanding clinicians networking with music educators across the country. More and more, professional jazz musicians are offering clinics together with their performances in the public schools. These clinics are giving students "hands-on" experiences with some of today's best musicians. They also add a spark of excitement to the whole jazz program.

Needs and materials

Over the last twenty years, jazz education materials have flourished. Since 1975, I have personally reviewed over 500 improvisa-

tion-related materials in the *Jazz Educators Journal*. Play-along records and cassettes and improvisation methods have led the way. Music educators' magazines are devoting more space to these teaching materials. Publishers of jazz ensemble charts are offering a number of new features, such as full scores, written or transcribed sample solos, scales and chords for solo sections, fully voiced piano and bass parts, drum parts that integrate lead parts, and full recordings. Jazz ensemble and combo charts with flexible instrumentation have been well received by educators. Recent technological advances have allowed the production of a wealth of jazz videotapes promoting "live" jazz and "how to" instruction.

More instructional materials are needed for teaching improvisation in the heterogeneous classroom. Large-ensemble training materials are also needed: of all the materials I have reviewed, there are fewer than ten designed for the large jazz group. One of the definitive training methods for jazz ensemble that is still used was published in 1967.

Networking trends

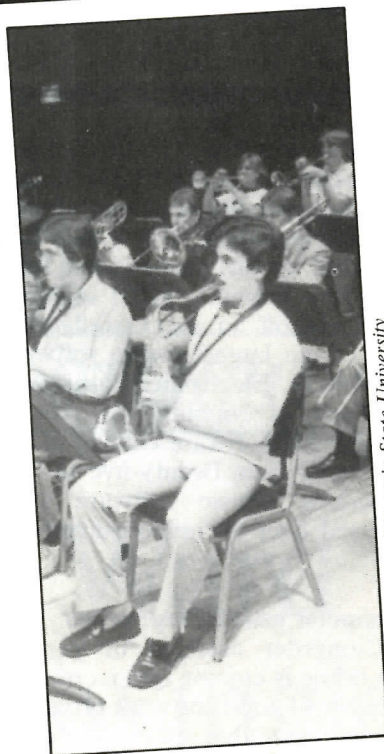
Networking is the process of connecting people with people, sharing ideas, sharing information, and getting things done. Networking concentrates on the individual and the small group achieving their goals. Today, there seems to be a trend away from the influence of large centralized organizations in America, while local government and individual groups are becoming stronger. The National Association of Jazz Educators (NAJE) and the National Jazz Service Organization (NJSO) are two grass roots groups that are essential to the future of jazz education.

NAJE has just commemorated its twentieth year of service to music education. During this period,

there have been some dramatic changes in jazz education. NAJE sponsors annual national conventions that link the country together with clinics and concerts. Another example of networking in NAJE is found in their directory of more than forty national chairpeople who are accessible to the general membership for individual help in solving their curricular, pedagogical, and performance problems.

For the past three years, the NAJE and the Yamaha Music Corporation have sponsored the "School Outreach Service" (SOS) with colleges. SOS actively assists high school jazz programs, using the talents of college jazz students. These college students are enlisted to support, reinforce, and supplement the public-school jazz programs by means of community involvement and interaction. In its third year, approximately sixty high schools with 5,300 music students have been directly affected by seven colleges and their 110 jazz students. Incidentally, these services are provided free to the public schools.

The NJSO was established in 1984 to nurture the growth and enhancement of jazz music as an American art. It provides information and services to individuals and organizations committed to the creation, performance, instruction, presentation, and preservation of jazz music. In a recent study, the NJSO found that the same number of adults like jazz music as chamber music, and that there is both a positive correlation and a crossover between the audiences.⁷ It also indicated that the jazz audience is composed of better-than-average educated listeners, most of whom are between the ages of eighteen and thirty-four. Together, the NAJE and NJSO are providing the necessary leadership for continuing the growth of jazz education in the 1990s.



Photograph courtesy of Georgia State University

High-tech trends

There will always be jazz enthusiasts who prefer acoustic performances, but there are also many who have grown up with a predominantly electronic background. Musical Instrument Digital Interface (MIDI) techniques have become standard fare in contemporary jazz/rock fusion, as many prominent jazz artists make use of MIDI and computer applications in their music (both recorded and "live"). With this in mind, it would better serve the future of music education if teacher-training institutions could take a more active interest in high technology and its varied application. At a large state university, noted nationally for its music school, an electronics store held a MIDI clinic for the college's music education majors. Twenty-five out of twenty-eight senior music education majors had no previous

knowledge of MIDI, and only one student had any concept of its applications. One of the faculty members was given the responsibility to learn high technology applications so that in-house instruction could be regularly included in the music education methods courses.

While we live in an increasingly complicated high-tech world, John Naisbitt made an interesting observation: Every new technology must have a corresponding human involvement. If not, that new technology will not meet with general acceptance or become standard practice. Jazz thrived on the early technologies, such as the phonograph and radio. Today, jazz videos, play-along records, composition/printing software, MIDI interfaces, computer-assisted instruction programs for music, and interactive video are just a few examples of how high technology can be tailor-made for personal, self-help instructional applications.

Two years ago, San Jose High School, one of the oldest high schools in the San Francisco Bay area, was on the brink of closing. Today, it is a technology magnet school offering the prestigious International Baccalaureate (IB) degree. This can be partly attributed to efforts of one teacher, Bill Erlendson, who put together an extraordinary music studio with thirty complete MIDI stations and attracted and retained students. With this high-tech equipment, students now have access to a MIDI recording and desktop publishing studio and are given the opportunity to learn composition, playback, editing, and printing techniques. Along with classes in computer and keyboard literacy, students receive interactive instruction in music fundamentals, theory, and history. They test the boundaries of their creativity by working on projects in songwriting and sound creation and manipulation. It is important to

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note that their music program is still tied to acoustic sound production; students are not just sitting in front of monitors all day.

Three years after Erlendson's initial efforts, more than three thousand K-12 students are exposed to a curriculum based on the merger of electronic peripherals and acoustic instruments. "For those kids who have had very little music, we want to give them exposure to classical music, the creation of music, and especially electronics," staff member Hal Peterson said. "I strongly feel that in the 1990's it will be the way you're expected to understand music. Ninety percent of the vocational opportunities in music are now technologically oriented."⁸

Computer composition

At St. Louis University High School in St. Louis, Missouri, the vocal teacher regularly records his vocal arrangements via a computer composition program; each vocal part is on a different channel and the piano accompaniment is on the fifth track. In rehearsal, he plays back each vocal part through one of four speakers placed at the four corners of the choir room. His students are placed correspondingly in each of the four corners of the room and sing along with the recording. Next, he transfers each student's part to two-track cassette tape for individual practice. One track contains the student's part, and the piano accompaniment is on the second track.

MIDI, by which computers and electronic equipment can be linked together with traditional instruments, is a technology that may change what we teach. In addition to hardware such as samplers, sequencers, and digital recording techniques, there are MIDI-capable guitars and wind, brass, and keyboard instruments that offer

features such as transposition, expression, a seven-octave range, and the capability of playing chords in accompaniment to a melody line for wind, guitar, trumpet, and keyboard instruments. MIDI software is taking off so successfully that one of the largest music software publishers, Electronic Courseware Systems, is doubling the size of their MIDI software catalog in the next year from twenty-five to fifty programs. Music software sales grossed over 90 million dollars in 1987.

Computer assisted instruction

Computer assisted instruction for music is coming into its own. A number of good software programs are available that specifically fulfill jazz education needs. There is software that uses traditional improvisation instruction combined with a play-along approach. An excellent harmonic dictation program deals with both jazz chord progressions and jazz voicings.

High technology in music is opening up the field of jazz education to new audiences. In the 1990s, there will be a need for clinics and seminars to get music educators personally in touch with these new trends. Also, professional music journals need to devote more editorial space to technology as it continues to become more sophisticated. College music programs still need to develop training for long-term development and growth.

Through its creative resources, jazz education can provide a unique attraction for student interest and musical growth. Perhaps what makes jazz education so vital and attractive for the 1990s is that the diversity of jazz, with its many musical styles and its compatibility with technology, will help to make jazz education an exciting catalyst for music education in the 1990s.

The future of jazz education, however, will still depend on the efforts of dedicated teachers such as those cited in this article. Dick Dunscomb, NAJE past president, summarized the future of jazz education:

I am very proud of the strides made in relocating the jazz classroom from the clubs to the schools. But bear in mind, with that move comes the responsibility of perpetuating the traditions and blazing new horizons. It is an awesome responsibility which we can handle if we approach it with the seriousness it demands.

We will not be deterred in these efforts. To us it is possible to be both basically educational and pleasurable. It works!⁹

Notes

1. This point, that technology is linked with the development of jazz, is made by Jack Wheaton in his 1976 doctoral dissertation from the University of Northern Colorado. The *Jazz Educators Journal* reprinted several chapters from Wheaton's dissertation in 1977 and 1978.
2. Paul Tanner and Maurice Gerow, *A Study of Jazz* (Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown Co., 1973), 251.
3. John Berry, "High School Jazz Bands: The State of the Art," in *Jazz Education Today* (Elkhart, IN: The Selmer Corporation, 1979), 6-9; Lois N. Harrison, "Music Education in California Public Schools," *California Music Educator* (February-March 1988), 12-13.
4. Walter Barr, "NAJE Directory to Jazz Studies in Higher Education," *Jazz Educators Journal* (published in two parts: February/March 1983 and April/May 1983); John Leisenring, "Survey of Jazz Pedagogy Courses at the College Level," *Jazz Educators Journal* (December/January 1984).
5. Lee Bash, letter to the author about trends in jazz education, June 1988.
6. Donald DeRoche, telephone conversation with the author, May 31, 1989.
7. Harold Horowitz, *The American Jazz Music Audience*. (Washington: National Endowment for the Arts, 1986; ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 280 757.)
8. "The Renovation of a School Music Program," *MENC Soundpost* 4, no. 3 (Spring 1988).
9. Richard Dunscomb, *B D Guide*, "Reviews," 15.