AESTHETIC EDUCATION and the JAZZ ENSEMBLE

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During the past quarter century, public and private school music educators have experienced many challenges. School boards and administrators have lost their appreciation for music as an essential element in the educational growth of children. Decreasing enrollments, budget and program cuts have threatened the public school music curriculum and the security of the band director. Chorus and general music teachers have been asked to teach other subjects along with their music classes. In addition to his or her classroom duties, today's music educator must be a salesperson and fundraiser. He or she must be ready to defend the educational worth and value of his program to individuals who view music as just a diversion and entertainment for school functions.

Music educators must be concerned with offering their students the opportunity to gain insight and to mature as individuals through the experience of performing, listening and understanding music. Following the ideal of teaching the beauty, value and aesthetic worth of music is extremely difficult in today's classroom. Noted music educator and philosopher, Bennett Reimer (1970) states that "the primary function of aesthetic education is to help people share the aesthetic meaning which come from expressive forms" (p. 68). Reimer continues by listing four steps that a music educator should consider when teaching.

1.

Music which is genuinely expressive is its characteristics must constitute the core of material for studying and experiencing. One chooses art works because of their aesthetic quality, knowing that the higher this quality the more satisfying, the richer, the more powerful can be the aesthetic meanings shared.

2. The experience of music as expressive form is the be-all and end-all of music education, for such experience is the only way of sharing music's aesthetic meaning.
3. The study of music - the means for reaching aesthetic ends - should concentrate on those characteristics of sound which make them expressive.
4. The language and the techniques used by the music educator must be true to the nature of music as expressive form. (p. 68-69)

In conclusion, Reimer argues:

> The role of the music educator as aesthetic educator - which is to make accessible the aesthetic meaning of music - is an active, directive, involved one, calling for a high degree of musical sensitivity and pedagogical expertise. To help people share aesthetic meaning is no simple task, but it is perfectible capable of being fulfilled by good teachers. (p. 69-70)

Searching for ways to overcome the non-educational problems and keeping in mind the artistic and aesthetic ideals of music has left the music educator at a loss. To add to this frustration, two new classes have become major components in the majority of high school music programs: the competitive marching band and the jazz ensemble. Each of these classes challenge the director's educational background and teaching skills.

The competitive marching band and the jazz ensemble have helped make school music programs become more visible in their communities. In many cases this added visibility has aided in avoiding partial or total music program cuts, but it has also placed a great deal of pressure on the director. While competitive marching places demand upon the director's time and energy, the jazz challenges his or her training and knowledge of jazz and improvised music.

The marching band is viewed by a great majority of music educators as nothing more than a service to its school. By participating in a marching band, students can improve their instrumental technique, learn discipline and socialize. A victory at a marching competition can bring recognition and pride to the student, but this does little in developing musical understanding and sensitivity. In most cases, the marching band, especially if it enters numerous competitions, actually hinders the development of young musicians by postponing concert band rehearsals. Nevertheless, the marching band is a virtual necessity in the vast majority of high schools. Colleges and universities recognize this necessity and offer courses in marching band technique and usually require all of their instrumental music education majors to march.

The jazz ensemble, unlike the marching band, has had a lower profile in the school music curriculum. The overwhelming majority of music teachers are not fully aware of the educational potential inherent in the teaching and performance of jazz and improvised music. Very few music educators have had any experience in the jazz idiom and therefore have little insight as to how a well-taught jazz ensemble could aid in developing young musicians.

The number of jazz ensembles at the middle and high school level has grown at a phenomenal pace, however. In 1960, approximately 5,000 high schools had jazz ensembles. By 1970, 10,000 jazz groups existed in over 8,500 junior and senior high schools. Well over one-half million students participated in jazz ensembles by 1979 and over 70% of the 30,000 middle and high schools in the United States had at least one jazz group (Suber, 1979). The jazz ensemble has become an integral part of most high school instrumental music programs. This has happened in spite of the fact that the overwhelming majority of music educators teaching in the public school have little or no training in jazz or improvised music.

Colleges and universities have been slow in reacting to the urgent need for jazz education courses in their music education programs (Baker, 1979). The typical jazz studies degree emphasizes performance on the professional level. Improvisation, composition, arranging and performance techniques are stressed with a minimum of attention given in the area of jazz education. In his survey, Walter Barr (1983) discovered that only four colleges coordinated their undergraduate, three their masters and one their Ph.D. music educat
ion degree offerings with their jazz studies program. The majority of colleges, 76% (Carter, 1986) to 81% (Barr, 1983), offer some type of jazz course as an elective. The jazz performance ensemble is by far the most frequently offered elective, but courses in improvisation, jazz methods and jazz rehearsal techniques are increasing. Most colleges encourage their music education majors to take jazz electives, but only 16% (Barr, 1983) require jazz related courses for fulfillment of a music education degree. Due to degree requirements, many future public school music teachers never get the opportunity to experience even the minimum jazz educational offering (Newman, 1982). It is understandable that most music teachers have little insight into the artistic and aesthetic value of jazz music. "One of the most serious problems facing quality jazz education today is that most public school teachers are not formally prepared to teach jazz". (Fisher, 1981, p. 46)

Band directors are becoming aware of their deficiencies and of the need for jazz education courses for future music education majors. In two current surveys (Fisher, 1981; Tracy, 1986), public school band directors were asked questions concerning their backgrounds regarding jazz education, teaching observations and philosophical attitudes. One section of Fisher's survey randomly selected 100 band directors in Pennsylvania. Tracy's information came from responses by 83% (25 of 30) of the middle and high school directors in the Jefferson County, Kentucky, public schools. The data on the philosophical attitudes show a marked degree of similarity:

1.
All colleges offering degrees in music education should include courses in jazz education in their curriculum.

Fisher 95% Tracy 100% agreed or strongly agreed

2. Jazz education courses should be required of all music education majors.

Fisher 79% Tracy 76% agreed or strongly agreed

3. The ideal jazz experience for the music education major would include both performance and jazz education courses.

Fisher 76% Tracy 100% agreed or strongly agreed

4. Colleges that offer degrees in music education should have at least one full time faculty member to direct the jazz performance ensembles and teach jazz education courses.

Fisher 90% Tracy 96% agreed or strongly agreed

Two additional philosophical inquires were made in Tracy's survey which were not included in Fisher's study. Tracy found that 100% agreed or strongly agreed that all music education majors should have the opportunity to perform in a jazz ensemble (big band, combo or chorus). Only 64% of Tracy's respondents agreed that a performance class should be required of all music education majors.

Forty-eight percent of the directors in Tracy's (1986) survey said that they had directed a jazz ensemble. One hundred percent believed that their students would benefit from the experience of playing in a jazz ensemble even though they might not have the opportunity to offer such an ensemble. A jazz education course was not a required subject for any of the educators sampled by Tracy. Sixty-four percent of the educators did perform in a college jazz ensemble, but only 16% took a non-performance jazz class. Seventy-four percent stated that a non-performance jazz course was not offered by their college. After receiving their music education degree, 48% of the band directors participated in a workshop or clinic concerning jazz music.

It is obvious that jazz is being taught in the schools and will continue as an important part of high school music programs. Instructors are aware of their shortcomings and are searching for ways to remedy the situation. The main questions now are:

1. "What are the aesthetic values of Jazz?"

2. "How should the jazz educator approach the teaching of jazz as aesthetic education?" (Brown, 1981, p. 33)

According to Bennett Reimer (1970), "the aesthetic or expressive elements of music are rhythm, melody, harmony, tone color (including dynamics), texture and form" (p. 52). Each of these elements is present in a jazz performance. Improvisation certainly is not unique to jazz and has been an element in music for centuries. Bach and Mozart were two of music's finest improvisors. What makes jazz improvisation unique in how rhythm, melody, form and humanness of sound are developed spontaneously. Jerry Coker (1964) describes jazz improvisation as "a spontaneous exchange or interplay of musical ideas" (p. 1). Coker continues:

> Jazz music, with its roots in basic rhythm and simple melodies, has developed naturally into a blend of musicianship, humanity, and intellect, having universal appeal. Improvisation has existed in other styles, but in the classical music of Western civilization its use has been stifled by enlarged instrumentations and the complexity of compositional techniques which have made no allowances for this means of individual expression. The composer achieves the effect of spontaneity when his written music flows naturally and is well played. Jazz has brought about a Renaissance in improvisation, providing a style which is conducive to spontaneous creation by utilizing standard musical elements, such as 4/4 time, songs of uniform length and for (usually 32 measures in length, with an A-A-B-A structure), fairly standardized instrumentation, steady tempi, consistent and logical harmonies, stylized melodies and rhythms, and even an established order of introductions, statements of theme, sequence of soloists, and coda and endings. (p. 1)

"Jazz is a performer's art which speaks to the listener" (Brown, 1981, p. 34). The jazz performer creates a musical adventure for the listener. The performer must use his or her "creativity, imagination, and craftsmanship" (Brown, 1981, p. 35) at all times. "The style of the individual player is affected by his personality, his intelligence, his talent, and his coordination" (Coker, 1964, p. 2). The jazz performer shares his or her uniqueness with the listener. Bennett Reimer (1970) observes:

> "It is precisely in this sharing of insight into the common nature of humanity that are exercises its humanistic effects. There is no more powerful way for humans to explore, embody and share their sense of the significance of human life than through the making and experiencing of art. When the act of creation has taken the artist deep into the nature of human existence; when the perceiver similarly but individually shares the sense of the human condition embodied in the art work; both creator and perceiver have been carried below the surface differences and division of daily life to a point where the common humanity of people can be glimpsed and felt". (p. 50)

The listener is creating with the performer in that he or she must interpret and anticipate the experiences as the music is being played.

A common complaint about jazz music is that there is no melody. As the artist creates, it is his or her responsibility to play what he feels and hears from within. The listener must be receptive to the creative process and try to perceive the music as it develops. Reimer (1970) describes this process clearly:

> What takes place between the artist and the perceiver is not communication but "sharing." The sharing occurs by means of the art work, which contains an embodiment of insight about feeling, this embodiment capable of giving rise to insights into feeling on the part of the perceiver. The perceiver's insight cannot be precisely those of the creator. In the first place, the creator has not made a simple statement of a message but a complex set of aesthetic qualities capable of giving rise to many and varied insights. In the second place, the creator is one person and perceiver is another. Each will respond differently to the aesthetic qualities created or perceived in the work, by virtue of their different lives. At the same time, each will share a sense of significant insight into human feeling, by virtue of their sharing of the common human condition. (p. 50)

Can an aesthetic approach to jazz education be used when teaching jazz and improvised music in our schools? Must the jazz ensemble be treated like the marching band and only function as entertainment? T. Dennis Brown (1981) believes that jazz education can be aesthetic in nature if the following goals are considered and followed:

> First, to make jazz education aesthetic education we must allow students to become sensitive to and discriminate among those musical elements that contribute to the aesthetic quality of jazz. In this way improvisation, timbre, pitch, rhythm, and all other musical elements that contribute to the musical quality of jazz become the focus of the jazz education process.
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> Second, jazz education as aesthetic education must be taught on its own terms emphasizing those aesthetic qualitites unique to the genre. Using a value system inappropriate to jazz is to ignore the intrinsic qualitites of jazz and to promote a bias and close mindedness to education goals.
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> Third, the jazz curriculum must reflect the aesthetic aims of education - creating, performing, analyzing, and perceiving jazz should be central to all jazz education programs not as individual ends but as part of a comprehensive curriculum aimed toward developing an awareness of and sensitivity to the aesthetic qualities of the music.

Finally, it is critical that jazz education have a clear and precise philosophy based upon the aesthetic values of jazz. We postulate the following statement as a basis for the implementation of this philosophy:

> The aim of jazz education should be to develop in students a sensitivity to the expressive qualitites of jazz and to provide opportunities for musical growth through creating, performing, and perceiving jazz. To this end jazz education must be consciously aware of the depth of human understanding available to students through jazz education as aesthetic education. (p. 38)

The general music teacher can incorporate jazz in the classroom by various means. Unlike classical music, the complete development of jazz can be heard on recordings. Legendary jazz masters like Armstrong, Ellington, Parker, Holiday and Davis can be heard creating their own music. Various record collections are available so that an historical perspective can be given to students even in a remote school system (an excellent collection is the Smithsonian Collection of Classic Jazz).

Jazz improvisation works well with Orff and Kodaly (Kuzmich & Bash, 1984). Students can improvise through song, on instruments or in ensemble. It can be a very exciting experience for all involved. High aptitude students could be allowed to develop at their own pace while their classmates act s accompanists (Gordon, 1971). Call and response, group and individual improvisation are all possible when guided by an adept instructor. Students of all ages can participate and benefit from the experience.

Jazz choirs became an established element in vocal music education during the 1970's (Kuzmich & Bash, 1984). Many excellent arrangements are now available for the jazz and swing choir. Creative vocal teachers can also adapt instrumental methods and play-along material for use in their classroom. Like the instrumental student, vocalists can now perform material that allows them to develop as an improvising soloist. Many schools are combining their jazz ensemble and jazz vocal groups in performance situations.

Junior high and middle school music instructors are also using jazz teaching concepts with their bands (Burnsed, 1982; Baker, 1979). Some schools are forming traditional jazz ensembles while others work on improvisation during the full band rehearsal. Students are eager and receptive to the principles of improvisation. They enjoy being challenged with a goal that expects them to be creative and knowledgeable. Many composers and arrangers are writing with the younger, less experienced, ensemble in mind (Baker, 1979; Kuzmich & Bash, 1984).

Jazz education at the high school level has limitless possibilities for student involvement and musical growth. If a student is fortunate enough to have been introduced to improvisation at an early age, his or her awareness and musical understanding will certainly be enhanced. A well directed jazz ensemble, in conjunction with a good concert band and orchestra program, will afford the student an excellent environment for musical growth. The music educator will benefit by having variety in his program that will in turn challenge his or her creativity and teaching skills.

The large jazz ensemble (15 or more students) encourages groups participation yet demands individual strength. If a band program is too small to have the personnel for a large ensemble, a combo (4 to 9 students) can be very rewarding for the student. Many educators form combos out of their large ensemble for the maximum jazz experience (Aebersold, 1981; Baker, 1979). If only a few students are interested and the instrumentation is not appropriate for either a combo or large ensemble, many excellent play-along records are available that can give an

individual the jazz experience. Harmonic and melodic skills (scale/chord practice) in conjunction with improved listening habits, can only enhance the performance level of all involved.

Music educators must not fall in to the trap of just limiting the jazz band to performances at ball games and pep rallies. The jazz ensemble should exist for the artistic and aesthetic development of the students, not to satisfy the athletic department. Directors need to be cautious of competitive jazz festivals. Many directors enter competitive festivals and only work on four or five numbers the entire year. The concept of individual development through improvisation is often overlooked because of concentrated ensemble rehearsals. This type of approach is the same as the competitive marching band. It only differs in style and setting.

The jazz ensemble must be thought of as an educational experience with musical worth and value. A well directed jazz ensemble, stressing individual and creativity, will enhance any musical program. If music, concert band, orchestral or jazz, is taught and performed in a caring and thoughtful manner, everyone will "win" and the overall aesthetic benefit will be obvious.

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