



# PROVIDING JAZZ RESOURCES FOR IOWA'S EDUCATORS

A Word From The President

## JEI President's Message

All across the state, jazz bands are hitting their stride as festival season reaches its zenith. Directors are looking for ways to maximize their students' learning and appreciation of this great music. JEI is here to help! Inside this issue of the newsletter you will find articles that are full of suggestions on ways to get the most out of your festival and clinic experiences.

As part of our ongoing mission, JEI is proud to announce an exciting educational opportunity. The San Francisco Jazz Collective will present a workshop at the Cedar Falls High School auditorium on March 27 from 2:30 to 4 PM. Directors are invited to bring students to hear and learn from these incredible musicians. Because many of you may have difficulty getting to Cedar Falls by 2:30, the clinic is being run with a "drop in" policy—come as soon as you can, but enter quietly. For more information about this amazing band, please visit their website: <http://www.sfjazz.org/sfjazzcollective>. Stick around following the clinic for more music by UNI student ensembles. You and your students should not miss the concert performance by the SF Jazz Collective that night at the Gallagher Bluedorn Performing Arts Center. The GBPAC is making tickets available to students for \$10 for zone 1, 2 or 3 seats (regular youth prices

are \$23, \$27 and \$38). We also have a number of tickets available to give away to directors who bring students to the concert. Please remember to inquire about those at the workshop or by e-mail to Kyle Engelhardt, [kyle.engelhardt@cfschools.org](mailto:kyle.engelhardt@cfschools.org).

The deadline for submission of All-State audition cds is approaching. Be sure to give yourselves and your students plenty of time to prepare and record the best audition possible. Recordings are due March 1, 2014. The auditors were given the following instruction to guide them in the selection process: "JEI values authentic jazz style (including demonstration of appropriate rhythm section techniques), tone quality and improvisational abilities highly. These should be your primary consideration in selecting your section." Keep this in mind as you assist your students in preparation of their recordings. Many of our members have gone out of their way at festivals to encourage specific students they hear to submit a cd. If one or more of your students received such encouragement, please follow up. We want these ensembles to truly represent the very best student jazz musicians in the state.

Christopher Merz, President  
Jazz Educators of Iowa



### JEI BOARD

**PRESIDENT  
CHRIS MERZ**

**PRESIDENT-ELECT  
KYLE ENGELHARDT**

**PAST PRESIDENT  
RODNEY PIERSON**

**VICE-PRESIDENT  
STEVE SHANLEY**

**SECRETARY  
JEFF SCHAFFER**

**TREASURER  
MYRON PETERSON**

[Join us on](#)

**facebook**

[Listen to Jazz](#)



[Learn more](#)

*Synergy Jazz*  
FOUNDATION



## Clinic Time

Submitted by Chris Merz  
[Chris.Merz@uni.edu](mailto:Chris.Merz@uni.edu)

Clinics present a great educational opportunity for both you and your students. It's always great to get an informed and fresh set of ears on your band as some issues may have escaped your attention, and another educator may have ideas about ways to confront issues you are already aware of. At the very least, it never hurts for your students to hear the same things you've been saying from a second source. Whether a 20-minute session following your performance at a jazz festival or a 2-hour clinic with an invited guest at one of your regular rehearsals, you will want to maximize the impact of your clinic session. The goal of this article is to offer suggestions about how to get the most out of any clinic session.

### Know your clinician(s)

If you know who your clinician will be prior to the clinic, have a look at his bio. In most cases you can find this posted on the web. Convey this information to your students so that they understand that the clinician is drawing upon years of professional performance and/or teaching experience in their assessment of your band's strengths and weaknesses. This knowledge may also give you a chance to direct specific questions to the clinician based upon his particular strengths. A lead trumpet player, for example, may have some insight into how best to pace your set to avoid fatigue, a drummer should be able to assist your young drummer in how to set up ensemble figures, and an arranger may have ideas about how to draw solo background material from written passages within a chart, or suggestions as to how your rhythm section can frame solos differently.

### Prepare your students

Remind your band that, unlike most of the rest of their subject matter in school, music is open to a variety of interpretations. No two bands will play the same piece exactly the same way, nor should they. The clinician offers suggestions based on her sense of what is most important in the music, informed by practical experience in performance, listening and study. These opinions may occasionally conflict with yours and those presented by other clinicians. That's ok! You can help your students to understand that music is not a science, that by opening themselves up to a variety of

interpretations, they will develop artistic flexibility and a deeper sense of the stylistic attributes of the pieces they are playing.

### Maximize time spent with the clinician

This item applies more to the clinic-within-a-festival. Some festivals provide equipment to facilitate this aspect. Nothing stalls a clinic more than waiting for a bass amp to arrive, or taking too long to set up a drum set. Your students should move to their places quickly and wait quietly for the clinician to begin. If you have done your research (see "Know Your Clinician"), you may provide a brief introduction to remind the students with whom they will be working and to focus attention on the clinician for the start of the session.

### Keep out of sight and take notes

Nothing is more frustrating to a clinician (and counterproductive to the clinic) than a director who sits in plain sight of the band, signaling disapproval with what the clinician is offering. I have given clinics in which the students check their director after every comment to see if it's "correct." You can circumvent this by seating yourself behind the trumpet section and taking notes. If the arrangement of the clinic room doesn't allow for this, focus your attention on the clinician, not your band. Your students will follow your example.

### The clinician is boss—temporarily

The most productive clinics I have given are ones in which the students totally invest themselves in every suggestion I make, regardless of whether it actually works for them in the end. If the band is skeptical of a suggestion and only gives 50% in attempting it, it will of course fail. The only way for them and you to discover if an idea truly has merit is for them to believe in the concept as they try it. You can help to foster that culture. Even if you return to your original interpretation of the music immediately after the clinic, you and your students will have learned something.

### Thank them for their work

In many cases your clinician may have driven many miles and given up several hours of their time (including travel) to share their expertise with you. If the clinic is part of a jazz festival, the clinician will be paid through entry fees. If you have invited the clinician to your school, the burden of compensation lies with you. Take into account the amount

of time the clinician is spending away from home to work with your students, including round trip driving time, when calculating how much to offer. You may also wish to consider the experience level of the clinician. If you are unsure, start a dialog when you first contact the clinician. This helps to avoid an uncomfortable ending to a very successful session. Regardless of who pays the clinician, or how much, encourage your students to show their appreciation through applause at the end of the clinic. In a way, the clinician has just performed for your students.

### Follow up as needed

If you need clarification on specific points after reviewing your notes from the clinic, an e-mail or telephone follow up might be a good idea. The sooner you follow up, the more likely your clinician will recall your band's performance. Keep in mind, however, that clinicians at a jazz festival will typically work with 7-10 bands in the course of a day. Remind the clinician of your repertoire and keep your questions as specific as possible.

### Reinforce concepts with your students

Don't waste time discussing in detail the points you disagree with. Instead, dig into the suggestions you feel were valuable at the next available opportunity. Do this as soon after the clinic as possible, while the experience is still fresh in your mind and the minds of your students. Your notes will help you.

### Consider a visit

If the clinician's work with your students was particularly inspiring, or if there was a unique and interesting viewpoint presented, consider bringing the clinician to your school for a longer session. This follow-up session could include some breakout time in which the clinician can work specifically in his area of expertise (i.e. the saxophone section). You might also consider an improvisation session where the clinician works with your rhythm section and soloists.

The clinic can be one of the most musically valuable experiences your students can have. Proper attitude and preparation will help insure that both you and your students have a positive experience.

Christopher Merz is the president of Jazz Educators Of Iowa.



“Clinics provide a great educational opportunity for both you and your students”

## Five Quick and Dirty Festival Tips

Submitted by Steve Shanley  
[steve.shanley@gmail.com](mailto:steve.shanley@gmail.com)

Welcome to the 2013-14 jazz festival “season.” I offer you the following five “Quick and Dirty” tips for jazz festival participation. Please note that I have learned all five of these the hard way.

**Use the Warm-up Room to Warm Up.** It is unlikely that you can fix much at this point, and trying to do so may only put the students on edge. So resist the urge to do too much “teaching,” and consider using the warm-up room to let students just warm-up and get relaxed. Perhaps you could warm up in reverse order of your performance order, so students go to the stage with the opening tune fresh in their brains.

**Pay Attention to the Stage Set-up.** Do not place your band wherever the chairs, stands, and drum rug happen to be when you get out on stage. Get the rhythm section as close to the horns as possible. Move the piano in with the rest of the rhythm section. Make sure the brass players’ bells are unobstructed to the audience. Aim the amplifiers. I know it is busy when you get on stage, but this is important and warrants your attention.

**Announce Your Selections.** Most jazz festivals do not have programs, so it is really nice to let the audience know what pieces you are performing (title, composer, and arranger) and which of your students will be featured. I realize the judges have this information already, but not sharing it with the rest of the audience gives the impression that you are only performing for the judges.

**Beware of Negative Non-Verbal Communication.** The performance may not go as well as you want. But making a painful face when the saxophones play out of tune or the drummer drops a beat during a fill will

not help. You might think making a painful face will convey to the judges that you are aware the performance was not perfect. However, you mostly just convey the fact that you are not nice. (Thanks to my wife for helping me realize this one.)

**Let the Clinician Give the Clinic.** I can’t really word this one delicately so here goes: I know it is painful to listen to the “expert” tell the students the same thing you told them a hundred times already. I know it can be challenging to hear a clinician give the exact opposite information that you have been giving the students. I know how tempting it is to let the clinician know how smart you are. However, comments like, “Hey kids, isn’t that the same thing I have been telling you?” “Well, that’s not how we like to do things!” or “I want them to start playing more sharp elevens on the major seventh chords, but they aren’t quite ready yet!” will not leave the clinician with a favorable impression of you or your band. Trust me: sit back and enjoy the fact that someone else is teaching your students for you. The worst-case scenario is that you later have to tell your students that you disagree with some of what the clinician said. (Bonus related tip: prepare your students for the clinic experience. Ask them to be receptive to the clinician, make eye contact, and thank him or her.)

Steve Shanley is the Vice-President of Jazz Educators Of Iowa

## Jazz Festival Feedback

Submitted by Kyle Engelhardt  
[kyle.engelhardt@cfschools.org](mailto:kyle.engelhardt@cfschools.org)

With jazz festival season well upon us, I thought I would share some ideas for using some of the feedback we all get from different festivals or contests.

This is my 14<sup>th</sup> year of teaching, and I still make sure to listen to every recording I get from a judge or clinician. I’m interested in their thoughts on the programming, any critiques of the band

or soloists, and their suggestions for improvement.

One of my favorite tricks is to break each recording down by tune on a spreadsheet, with my director’s score in front of me to use for measure number references. Every time one of the judges makes a comment, I start the reference with the measure number, and then summarize the comment next to the measure number for that tune. I do that for all three judges, and then I will sort the comments by tune and measure number to look for similar areas of concern. For example, if all three judges talk about saxophone unisons not being in tune in the first phrase at m. 33, it really sticks out to have those comments show up when I sort by measure number. Or, conversely, it’s fun to see what’s going well when all three judges like a drum solo right before the shout at m. 80 or something. It helps me focus on the comments, and also helps me to explain to the students in my band what each judge is hearing on each tune. I can listen and transcribe all three recordings from the judges in about an hour or so. Then I like to hand the students a sheet of the transcribed comments and highlight some of the areas in our upcoming rehearsals for improvement. This allows the kids a chance to see all of the feedback from their performance, and doesn’t take a whole lot of rehearsal time.

A nice by-product of doing it this way is that I’ve seen students taking pencils and writing on their music in different places where the judges have said little comments like “Saxes – listen here,” or “Trumpets – check the unisons – back off.” They have a specific measure number to use as a reference, and I won’t have to use rehearsal time to tell them where they were struggling.

Once you’ve gathered all of your feedback, you may find conflicting advice, or opinions that vary wildly with what you are trying to do. That’s ok – that’s why there’s more than one judge. It’s up to you to determine what feedback to use, and what to take with a grain of salt.

When I've had conflicting advice at a festival, or I feel like, "Man, I just got beat up pretty good, all three judges hated part of this set/song/all of it/ etc..." I will call in a clinician, or ask a good band director friend to listen to the area(s) of concern from a clean recording and see what they say.

It's great to bring in a clinician, and have them work with your kids in your own rehearsal room or on your home stage for more than 20 minutes. The clinics I get at festivals are often great, but too short to really dig in and get as much done as we would all like. Or, they might spend 10 minutes fixing something that only happened because the stage acoustics were weird and then in the clinic room, the problem goes away. That's frustrating, and not a great use of time. Bringing in a clinician to work for an hour or two has really been fun for my kids, and gives me a chance to sit back, take notes, and observe an expert teacher.

One other quick tip: when you call/email your clinician to come and work, ask up front how much of an honorarium you can arrange for them to provide for their time. Try and have the check there for them that day, and everyone will be happy. It's important to account for their expertise and time.

Kyle Engelhardt is President-elect of JEI

## Focus

Submitted by Rodney Pierson  
[рпиerson@westmusic.com](mailto:рпиerson@westmusic.com)

When Chris requested submissions related to festival performance, I chose to offer ideas that help with focusing student performance.

Establishing the right reasons for your students to want to play music often is paramount to building a lasting appreciation of jazz for our students. Getting their heads in the right place, so to speak, and performance readiness involve a number of disciplines such as:

- Developing air support, technique and command of their instrument.
- Listening to and modeling other players.
- Discussing scale and note choice.
- Making smart melodic and harmonic considerations.

- Visualization
- ...to name a few.

Only having the desire to sound great does not guarantee that result. There are steps you can take to improve your students' success and focus. Limit distractions and organize the movement of students and equipment prior to arrival. Draw on their collective experience in rehearsal and talk through what they should expect to see at the Festival. Paint a picture- visualize the physical layout of the site. Create an expectation for your ensemble that sheds light on possibilities for learning and dissuades them from thinking about the hardware. It's interesting to me how groups sound better in the clinic time that directly follows the "actual" performance when some of these distractions have passed.

Struggling with "ego" is a dance we all know. Taking care of the right things for the right reasons generally leads to obtaining collateral treasures of the physical and emotional realms anyway. Kenny Werner, author of *Effortless Mastery*, speaks to a number of issues that face performers of all idioms. He is a world class jazz pianist and, having dealt with the same issues that we all face as musicians, has articulated a lasting approach and understanding for the underlying issues related to performance.

A quote from *Effortless Mastery*

*"As we expand our limited selves into this infinite consciousness, we tap into a network of infinite possibilities, infinite creativity-- great, great power. Carried by the waves of this ocean, we swirl past all limitations and maximize our God-given potential. Everything good that can possibly happen to us, from within and without, does happen.*

*As musicians/healers, it is our destiny to conduct an inward search, and to document it with our music so that others may benefit. As they listen to the music coming through us, they too are inspired to look within. Light is being transmitted and received from soul to soul. Gradually, the planet moves from darkness to light. We as musicians must surrender to the ocean of our inner selves. We must descend deep into that ocean while the sludge of the ego floats on the surface. We let go of our egos and permit the music to come through us and do it's work. We act as instruments for that work."*

You can learn more regarding Kenny's approach by purchasing "Effortless

Mastery" and by viewing his videos at the link below:

<http://kennywerner.com/effortless-mastery-videos>

Much of what Kenny discusses has come up in conversations throughout my musical life. I have known some who flourish in the "space" that Kenny describes while also knowing others who continue to miss the point entirely. That's not to say that we all should be musical Shamans but having a road map that incorporates creativity and introduces a "Musician's" point of view, helps our students to know they are not alone and that they're on the right path.

Rod Pierson is the past-president of JEI

## Easy steps toward a better bass guitar sound

Submitted by Jonathan Schwabe  
[jonathan.schwabe@uni.edu](mailto:jonathan.schwabe@uni.edu)

As we get into the thick of jazz band competition season, a few tips for getting a better bass guitar sound might come in handy. These are fairly easy fixes, and can yield a big bang for the buck.

### The "right" sound for the big band

Who really knows the answer to this question? We all can probably agree that the bass provides two critical functions for the band, harmonic support, and rhythmic pulse.

Placement of the amp is extremely important; Always position the bass amp so that the drums and bass are coming from the same location, tucked into the band as close as is practical. Remember that the drums and bass are the heartbeat of the band; the band (not just the audience) must hear and feel that pulse.

### EQ (tone shaping)

You can think of the bass sound as having four basic sonic properties:

Low: the essential foundation, the push (heartbeat) of the sound.  
Low mids: the roundness or broadness of the sound  
High mids; the articulation, ranging from throaty to nasally  
High; clarity and crispness- not much pitch information here either

Try to start from a flat response, with minimal accentuation of any of the four sonic territories, then add lows and highs to taste. Lows for the floor, highs for definition (use sparingly).

### Right hand placement /attack point

If you attack the string (on electric or upright) toward the bridge, the tone tends to be a more focused and articulated. If you attack the string closer to the neck, the attack is somewhat blunted, rounder if you will. At the risk of over-generalizing, right hand placement toward the end of the neck produces a better jazz sound (a bit more "uprightish"). If you are playing a rock chart, you might notice that placement toward the bridge may lend clarity to a nimble or syncopated line.

### Connect the notes

One of the most common mistakes I hear young bassists make has to do with note duration. In most swing contexts, a legato approach serves the music better than a staccato one (in other words connected as opposed to choppy). Of course, it falls to the director to have listened to the piece and to share the recording with the student so that they both have a sense of the style.

### Strings:

You might consider using flat wound strings. Flat wounds have a warmer, thumpier attack with a little less sustain than round wound strings. Round wounds have a springier, brighter sound with more sustain. Flat wounds come in two varieties; steel and nylon-wrapped (commonly known as tapewraps). Steel strings have a bit more punch while tapewraps are the darkest and to my ear, warmest (I use them). Fender, La Bella, and D'Addario all make good-quality flat wound strings, they cost a bit more than roundwounds, but last a long time-especially if cared-for.

### Do your homework:

I have found Youtube to be an invaluable resource. As they say, "a picture is worth a thousand words", so sit with your bassist and play a Youtube clip Richard Davis with the Thad Jones/ Mel Lewis Big Band, or Ray Brown with Oscar Peterson and talk about the sound characteristics. Also play some clips of rock bassists to compare and contrast. Try to instill in young players the idea that their own contribution might not

always be the most glamorous, but man is it ever important!

Contact me at [schwabe@uni.edu](mailto:schwabe@uni.edu) if you have questions.

Jonathan Schwabe is Professor of Music at the University of Northern Iowa and a bassist with 40 years of experience. He has performed with Marion McPartland, Lew Tabackin, Chris Potter and a host of others. He holds the DMA degree in composition from the University of South Carolina. His teachers include Richard Davis (bass), Jerry Coker (improvisation), Samuel Adler and John Anthony Lennon (composition).

## Why We Need Girls

Submitted by Erin Wehr  
[erin-wehr@uiowa.edu](mailto:erin-wehr@uiowa.edu)

This column is for elementary general music teachers, but let's be real. There aren't many elementary general music teachers reading this newsletter. So, rather than continue to write articles on teaching jazz in the elementary classroom, I am going to take this opportunity to start some discussions on how gender issues contribute to our not having much jazz in the elementary classroom. In this article I will address some of the needs for beginning this discussion. In future columns I will share my research findings in this area, and present some research-based ideas on how to get more girls interested in, and playing, jazz.

Since there are many opinions on this topic, and an article of this nature might be read with some skepticism, let me first share my background with you so that you know where I am coming from. My BM degree in trumpet performance is from UNI, with a minor in jazz studies. My MM and PhD are both in music education, the first from The University of North Texas, and the following from The University of Iowa. I have taught high school band in both Iowa and Illinois, and I have also taught general music. I have performed at The Iowa Jazz Championships both as a student, and as a director. Currently, I teach music education at The University of Iowa after having taught a couple years at both The University of Missouri and Eastern Kentucky University. For over 10 years I have been researching and presenting on the topic of females in jazz education, most recently at JEN 2014.

Most would agree that general music teachers are more likely to be female, while the jazz field leans the other

direction. Studies by Bash, Hores, McDaniel, and Ward-Steinman, to name just a few, have demonstrated that females have the same capacity to improvise in jazz as males. Yet, research by May, McKeage, Alexander, Steinberg, and others confirm that women remain a minority in the field of jazz. While many middle school and junior high jazz bands have 50% or greater female participation, there is a decrease in jazz participation by females as jazz study becomes more specialized and advanced. In particular, there is a dramatic attrition rate for women in jazz between high school and college, and there appears to be a decrease of female participation in jazz as the expectation to improvise increases. Very few female music majors are participating in college jazz education programs, and in particular, women interested in general music are even less likely to find their way into a jazz performance course.

Why should we care? There are many reasons. Here are just a few. First, if women are not participating in jazz, then we are losing potential audience members and supporters for the jazz field. Jazz is an idiom rich in common forms and melodies that contribute to the listening experience. Without some background to connect the listener to what they are hearing, jazz experiences will not be meaningful enough to encourage continued listening. This is during a time when jazz could benefit from a larger audience.

Next, according to the U.S. Department of Labor, musicians who learn several different instruments, and who are proficient in a variety of styles including jazz, have better employment opportunities. Delzell states that by not participating in jazz studies, girls can limit their career options in both performance and music education. This is visible by the low number of female high school directors in comparison to males. More female role models teaching jazz in high schools will encourage more females to participate in jazz.

Another reason to give female music majors experiences in jazz is so that they will teach jazz styles and vocabulary in their elementary classrooms. Imagine students coming to your jazz band already moving and grooving to jazz rhythms, singing with blues inflections, and appreciating what jazz is from years in general music. Much of the fear of improvisation comes from not understanding the forms and styles, and not having a basic jazz vocabulary. Experiencing jazz in an elementary classroom setting prior to a jazz band setting allows for creative experimentation prior to manipulating a

band instrument. This is a more natural progression than learning the jazz language and instrument technique at the same time.

Finally, if we justify jazz as having a place in the music curriculum, then we have to justify that jazz is worthy of study for males and females. Suggesting that jazz is important in music study, but only for males, would not be beneficial. Our continued efforts to give jazz a permanent place in our music curriculums would be well served by a more gender-balanced field.

In the next JEI Newsletter, I will present ideas on getting more girls involved in jazz improvisation. Please contact me if you would like any information regarding the studies cited here.

Erin Wehr serves on the JEI Advisory Board as Elementary Jazz Affairs chair.

## Taking the Competition Out of Jazz Competitions

Submitted by Jeff Schafer  
[jschafer@prairiepride.org](mailto:jschafer@prairiepride.org)

Jazz "season" is upon us and many educators are busy putting the final touches on their festival music selections. For many of us this means competition and working to make Jazz Championships but for some of us competing is not an option. Whether it is for personal reasons or school district directive to not compete it can be difficult to find a good outlet and playing opportunity for your students that does not involve competition. In this article I hope to provide some examples of what you can do to get the most out of the educational opportunities at area jazz festivals.

### Request the Option

Quite a few jazz band festivals offer a "comments only" registration opportunity. This is a great way to attend a festival that is close or of high quality without actually competing. Sometimes the option for "comments only" does not appear to be there. I have found that if you simply ask the festival organizer they are more than happy to accommodate your needs so don't assume you can't attend a festival just because "comments only" is not listed on the registration form. As long as the format of the festival is educational you and your

students can benefit from the opportunity to perform.

### Consider the Format

If the format of the festival you are considering is a 25 minute time slot with a potential clinic to follow it may not provide the educational opportunities you are looking for. If indeed your focus does not involve competition, there are many festivals that are set up to enhance the educational opportunities of participants. These festivals often include a large time period for warm-up, performance, and clinic. Sometimes an hour or more per group is provided. This gives the judges/clinicians ample time to work with your students on ensemble playing, soloing, interaction, and many other important facets of performing jazz. Some of the festivals I know of that provide this type of opportunity are the Coe Jazz Summit, Indianola Jazz Encounter, and Southeast Polk Jazz Festival. I am sure there are others that work off of this format but I have personal experience with the ones listed and feel they are great for both competition and comments only entries.

### Lead the Way

If you happen to teach a great distance from any viable educational performance opportunity, create your own. One of the things we do at Prairie Point is have a "clinic night" for all of our jazz band participants in grades 7-12. At this event we hire a quality educator from the community to come in and work with all three middle school jazz bands and also have the Prairie High School top jazz band perform in the cafeteria for the students. This gets the kids playing, allows them to learn from a quality teacher, and also helps with recruiting and transition to the PHS band program. There are MANY qualified jazz educators around the state who would be willing to help you out in this manner. See this list for some ideas of someone who may be close. By designing your own mini festival you ensure that your students get the best opportunity possible. The important thing to remember is that jazz music needs to be played. Nothing can substitute for the chance to perform and learn on the bandstand. Take what is available and important to you and your program and make it work for you to allow for as many performance opportunities as possible. We have a lot of great educators who also judge and finding the right festival with the right format can be a powerful educational

experience for you and your students. As always, don't hesitate to contact me with suggestions, questions, etc. I am happy to help you and your program in any way possible. All the best this spring!

Jeff Schafer is the secretary of JEI.

## Middle School/Junior High Jazz Contest Participation

Submitted by Colleen Hecht  
[hechtc@newell-fonda.k12.ia.us](mailto:hechtc@newell-fonda.k12.ia.us)

Jazz contest participation at the middle-school level encourages students to strive for excellence in their performance and allows them to listen to the excellence of their peers from other schools. The style and characteristics of the music promote independence of thought, self-discipline, responsibility, communication, and teamwork.

### What type of music should we prepare for contest?

It is best to prepare contrasting music so the adjudicators can hear that your group can play different styles of jazz. A swing tune is usually a great way to start your set, followed by a ballad. Choose your ballad based on your strongest player - and one that has a desire to work extra hard. To close your set, consider a funk or latin tune. There are many places you can listen to jazz arrangements and find jazz tunes that are on state lists ([www.jwpepper.com](http://www.jwpepper.com) is one.) At the junior high level, encourage as many students as possible to solo - even if it is only one time through the changes. The more they improvise, the more comfortable they will be with it. And, your high school directors will thank you for exposing them to improvisation at a young age!

### Do we need to set up a certain way for the performance?

Yes - the rhythm section sets up on the band's right. Most festivals will ask you to submit a diagram of how many chairs, stands, etc. you need and they will help you set up those things. They will not help you set up your rhythm section. It is best to assign each student in the band a job. For example, the lead alto carries the floor tom, 2nd alto carries the hi-hat, lead tenor carries



The more  
students  
improvise, the  
more  
comfortable  
they will be  
doing it.

the drum box, etc. The more details you can take care of before the contest, the smoother the day will go for you! After everyone is set up, it is important to do a sound check to make sure the amp and microphone levels are where you want them.

#### What will the ensemble be judged on?

Each jazz contest will have their own ballot. It is a good idea to go over the ballot with your students so they know what they will be judged on. Stress the categories that receive the most points. In general the categories usually include: ensemble (intonation, balance, blend, dynamics), rhythm section (balance, time, fills, comping, bass lines, band back up), style comprehension, improvisation (creativity, articulation, excitement, style), programming (staging,

music suitability.) Following contest, for the best learning to take place, go over the ballots with your students. Share with them what the judges thought they did really well, and areas that need improvement. If recordings from your performance are available, let your students listen to them.

#### Is there any special etiquette for participants and fans?

Overall, be respectful of other performances! Act how you would act at a concert. Some things to remind your students about:

Do not talk during performances.

Do not enter the performance area during a performance.

Turn your cell phone to silent.

Show your support by applauding and cheering all the students, regardless of school. All student have worked hard and are excited to perform for an audience that appreciates what they do.

Require your students to listen to as many other bands as possible. This will broaden their jazz knowledge!

It is best to over-prepare for contest! The director must be organized and have details planned out. This will ensure that your students will have the best contest experience possible!

Colleen Hecht is the band director in the Newell Fonda schools.

## Coda

## Final Words From The President

As in the past, I want to remind each of you that JEI belongs to YOU, the members. There are many ways to get involved in the steering of the organization. We strive for the best possible representation from across all demographics—big schools, small schools, Central, Eastern and Western parts of the state, elementary, junior high and high schools, instrumental, vocal, strings...

Speaking of getting involved, we are now accepting nominations for the JEI Executive Board positions listed below. All Executive Board members are expected to attend the four annual meetings: summer, IMEA, winter and IBA, where each will present a report. Additional duties for each are as outlined below.

"All terms are for two years and new nominations and voting take place in the spring of each even numbered year" - JEI bylaws.

### President Elect

This officer will ascend to the Presidency on July 1 two years following their election. The President Elect assists the President on an as needed basis. Additional items in the portfolio vary depending upon the needs of the organization at any given time.

### Vice President

Traditionally the Vice President has been someone with some lengthy tenure in the organization and who has served previously as President. This is because VP has typically existed to provide institutional wisdom. For the past 15-20 years, the VP has also been the conduit between JEI and IJC.

### Treasurer

Responsibilities of the treasurer include development of the Annual Budget and Event Budgets, collection of dues, management of the membership list, payment of bills, management of the bank account/deposits, etc. and collection of All-State Band participation fees.

### Secretary

The secretary's primary responsibility is to communicate with the membership on all matters related to our organization. This officer attends all meetings, records and distributes the minutes. The secretary also organizes the nominations and voting processes for the Hall of Fame.

Feel free to nominate yourself or someone you feel would be a good addition to the JEI leadership team. If you nominate someone else for a position, please check with them prior to nomination to ensure they are willing to serve.

This is also the time of year when we field nominations for the JEI Hall of Fame. The JEI Hall of Fame recognizes individuals who have created new directions and curricular innovations in regards to jazz education in the state of Iowa. We are now accepting nominations for induction into the 2014 JEI Hall of Fame. Visit the JEI website, [http://www.jeiowa.org/hall\\_of\\_fame.html](http://www.jeiowa.org/hall_of_fame.html), to view names and biographical information of the current members of our Hall.

- Please email nominations directly to Jeff Schafer by Monday, March 10th.
- Nominee bios and voting guidelines will be sent to membership on Monday, March 17th.
- Votes will be due by Monday, March 24th.

Finally, as your lives become increasingly busy, take some time to remember how and why you got into music in the first place. Take in a concert (such as the San Francisco Jazz Collective performance on March 27 at the Gallagher Bluedorn Performing Arts Center, sponsored by JEI) or sit down and listen to an entire cd without interruption. And not one that features the tunes of your current festival set. Remember that one of the most important things you can pass on to your students is your passion for music. Few of your students are likely to go into music professionally, but all can have a lifetime of enjoyment of it as listeners and casual players. You can best inspire your students when you yourself are inspired.

Christopher Merz  
[chris.merz@uni.edu](mailto:chris.merz@uni.edu)

# JAZZ EDUCATORS OF IOWA

[Join us on](#)

facebook

[Listen to Jazz](#)



[Learn more](#)

*Synergy Jazz*  
FOUNDATION

## Visit our website

[www.jeiowa.org](http://www.jeiowa.org)

Renew your membership by clicking [here](#).

Anyone can make the simple complicated. Creativity is making the complicated simple.

Charles Mingus

The JEI Newsletter is  
edited by  
Michael Omarzu