

## Topic II: The Jazz Ensemble & its Music Auditions

- When to hold auditions?
- Where to hold auditions?
- Who is to evaluate?
- What to evaluate?
- What do you look for in “key” parts?

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- Announcing the auditions:
  - Advertise and spread the word with flyers, news releases, and letters.
  - Make it very clear about where, when, and what
- Scheduling the audition:
  - Prior to the start of classes or during the first week?
  - Avoid losing time at the start of the semester
  - Be sure the room you use is equipped to handle the audition(s) (e.g., stereo, rhythm section equipment, etc.)

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- Evaluators
  - Usually works best with three judges, but less will do if the evaluation is fair and objective
  - Evaluators can either be specialists in the area or not
- Audition format
  - Use of sign-up sheets?
  - Schedule for like instruments individually, or
  - Schedule in instrument sections
  - Allow for “down” time to avoid judge fatigue

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- The actual audition may include:
  - Prepared music: how does the student prepares/practices given a select representative piece
  - Sight-reading: a couple of styles demonstrating the ability to read
  - Improvisation: at minimum, a basic blues, but may include other (e.g., rhythm changes)
  - Scales: major, minor, and/or, “jazz” scales (e.g., diminished, bebop, etc.)
  - Various styles: especially for rhythm section players

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### Auditions: Skills to be Evaluated

- Preparation of music
- Idiomatic jazz feel (interpretation)
- Rhythmic accuracy
- Use of jazz nuances
- Flow and fluency
- Phrasing
- Range
- Various musical aspects: tone, intonation, dynamics, articulation, tempo, key signature
- Pitch accuracy
- Last but not least, improvisation: most of the above apply, along with having a grasp of harmonic and melodic control/ understanding

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### Auditions: Results (Winds)

- Lead players should have the strongest of all the abilities, with emphasis on tone, reading, and in the case of brass, range
- Strong bottom (i.e., good tone and intonation with projection): baritone saxophone, bass trombone
- Strong soloists needed in 1st tenor, 2nd/5th trumpet, 2nd trombone, and at least one rhythm section player

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### Auditions:Results (Rhythm Section)

- Drummer should be a good reader, have good time, uses limbs independently, and can play various styles, react to the rhythm section “chemistry,” as well as create interest to enhance the music (fills, set-ups)
- Bass: good reader, solid time, can maintain a steady tempo, can react to the rhythm section “chemistry”
- Piano/guitar need to have first and foremost a good feel for comping (proper voicings, rhythmic variety), an understanding of the role as an accompanist and how to work with another chordal instrument, can react to the rhythm section “chemistry”

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### Auditions: Other

- Place students where they are best suited
- Post auditions results ASAP
- Close auditions may require further scrutiny (audition again after the first week)
- Sometimes give the benefit of the doubt to the experienced player
- Avoid more than one person on a part
- Do not assign parts, but rotate