Big Band Workshop

www.bigbandworkshop.com
info@bigbandworkshop.com
Ph. 0401 063267

BIG BAND INTENSIVE ❋ REPORT

Prepared by Peter Foley

5 March 2024

XXXXXX High Stage Band

Director: Jordan Jeffrey

Date of workshop: 24th & 25th Feb '24

Repertoire: Half the Fun - Ellington

Tenor Madness

Remembering Basie

This report is intended as a guide to assist in the development of the band. It is not in any way a statement of the quality of the band, rather it seeks to offer an external observation of how the band appeared to be functioning on the day of the workshop.

As with any adjudication or review of a musical performance, it is important for students to recognise that this is simply one person's view of what has been presented. It is never a statement of the worth of their performance. It is only an opinion of which they may choose to take notice.

Importantly though, it's hoped that this evaluation forms the basis for your young musicians to critically reflect upon their performance. It's far less important whether or not they agree with what is written than the fact that they consider why it is that they are agreeing or disagreeing.

Part 1 - The **BAND**

Overall band observations

Intonation	-	*Really good*
Rhythmic accuracy	-	*Really good*
Groove / Feel	-	*Very, very good*
Balance	-	*Very good*
Blend	-	*Excellent*
Use of dynamics	-	*Quite good*
Understanding of style	-	*Very good*
Effective use of character	-	*Could be amazing!*
Cohesiveness between sections	-	*Very, very good*
Section leader communication	-	*Good*
Demonstrated attitudes & engagement		Excellent

General comments about the band

This is a really nice group who have a great attitude trowards getting better.

The band is very capable of taking on new concepts and exploring musical possibilities; this is VERY important to developing the unique sound of this band.

Some beautiful sounds and awareness of style are being demonstrated.

Specific areas of strength

The band has a really great attitude in rehearsal. Attitude and engagement are probably THE most important indicators of the band's ability to achieve their potential.

The band demonstrates some really strong concepts of groove and delivers these with confidence.

Band members are really attentive and generally listened and considered all shared information, even when not directly addressed to their section. The is a really important attitude as it will help them understanding how ALL of the aspects aof their performance are being built.

Things to continue working on

Settling the groove from beat 1.

Make sure that attention is given to ALL parts of each piece (or of the entire program). It's obvious that hard work has been somewhat avoided in some sections. The band was less keen to work on Remembering Basie???

Maintaining focus throughout each piece.

Part 2A – **SAX SECTION**

Intonation	-	*Very, very good*
Rhythmic accuracy	-	*Excellent*
Groove / Feel	-	*Excellent*
Articulation	-	*Excellent*
Balance	-	*Quite good*
Blend	-	*Outstanding*
Use of dynamics	-	*Very good*
Understanding of style	-	*Excellent*
Effective use of character	-	*Outstanding*
Demonstrated attitudes & engagement	-	*Excellent*
Overall impression	-	*Excellent*

***Comment*:**

This section demonstrates maturity and genuine awareness of great sound.

Always aim to produce enough strenth of sound so that when the brasses are 'roaring', the sax section still contributes. Be careful though not to overblow.

At all times make sure that the tenor and bari lines are in good balance with the altos so that the section sounds warm.

The tones produced and the sensitivity demonstrated by this section is quite exceptional. WELL DONE!

Part 2B – **TRUMPET SECTION**

Intonation	-	*Very good*
Rhythmic accuracy	-	*Really good*
Groove / Feel	-	*Very good*
Articulation	-	*Very good*
Balance	-	*Really good*
Blend	-	*Very, very good*
Use of dynamics	-	*Good*
Understanding of style	-	*Quite good*
Effective use of character	-	*Quite good*
Demonstrated attitudes & engagement	-	*Excellent*
Overall impression	-	*Very, very good*

***Comment*:**

It was good to see the attention that the whole section was taking to achieve consistent articulation... really well done.

Make sure to be careful of intonation when playing very loud or very soft.

Make sure that the lower pitched parts always play with a full enough sound to support the lead trumpet. This will make the section sound stronger.

Work on developing your "big" section sound. This requires fully supported tones from ALL members of the section and will be enhanced by accuracy in rhythm and intonation.

Part 2C – **TROMBONE SECTION**

Intonation	-	*Quite good*
Rhythmic accuracy	-	*Good*
Groove / Feel	-	*Very, very good*
Articulation	-	*Really good*
Balance	-	*Very good*
Blend	-	*Very good*
Use of dynamics	-	*Really good*
Understanding of style	-	*Very good*
Effective use of character	-	*Really good*
Demonstrated attitudes & engagement	-	*Excellent*
Overall impression	-	*Very, very good*

***Comment*:**

Make sure to be careful of intonation when playing very loud or very soft.

Be sure that the section is constantly listening for, and taking, stylistic information (such as phrasing, articulation, dynamic shape of notes etc) from the lead trumpet player.

Really explore the opportunities that exist when all players coordinate slide movement (distance/speed/length) when playing fall-offs/vibrato etc. These techniques can add great character to your performance.

It was not always clear that every member of the section was playing with articulation identical to the lead. Taking time to mark your parts as a section will really help this issue.

Part 2D – **RHYTHM SECTION**

Rhythmic accuracy	-	*Very, very good*
Groove / Feel	-	*Very, very good*
Balance	-	*Very good*
Use of dynamics	-	*Developing but still requires constant attention*
Understanding of style	-	*Very good*
Effective use of character	-	*Very good*
*Piano part	-	*Very good*
*Guitar part	-	*Very good*
*Bass part	-	*Really good*
*Drum part	-	*Very, very good*
*Vibes / Aux Percussion part	-	*Very good*
Demonstrated attitudes & engagement	-	*Excellent*
Overall impression	-	*Very, very good*

Comment:

The section sets and maintains a really steady pulse for the band. Well done!

As the bass is the place where all the horns listen for their pitch/intonation, it is essential that there is absolute pitch accuracy on EVERY bass note. Make sure that time is taken to ensure this otherwise the band will struggle to play in tune.

At times the comping instruments were playing patterns that did not compliment each other. Be sure to ALWAYS discuss comping patterns within the section. Remember "LESS IS MORE". It's very easy for the section sound to become very rhythmically cluttered.... and this almost always leads to a loss of groove.

Take time during sectionals to consider how, when appropriate, you can define the various sections of the music (often at rehearsal marks) by slightly altering the groove. This may be using a different cymbal, changing comping instruments/patterns or simple dynamic shift. Doing this will make the song structure feel considerably more obvious and stable.

Part 3 – **SOLOISTS**

There were some great moments in the solos that created real interest.

Make sure to always follow the underlying harmony (the changes) when improvising. It is important that all notes/scales/modes etc reference the chordal structure. Take the time to make sure that you are doing this.

Some really beautiful tone and charecter was used at times. Excellent work!

Part 4 – **RECOMMENDATIONS** ***for the Band Director***

Make sure that ALL of your program has been worked on. The really tough part of preparing any program is ensuring that the students are as comfortable and excited about their least preferred parts of the program as they are at performing their favourite bits. This takes time.... but if you've chosen quality repertoire, demonstrate to them the specifics of musicality that lead you to choose the pieces.

Use the dynamic strength of the group even more than at present. Make the softs softer, and the louds.... louder. This will not only excite the audience, it will make the program WAY more fun for the band members.

Trust the suggestions of the band mebers when creating the musical interpretation of your program. Even if it is not completely as you would have expected, having them choose HOW they are going to play the pieces is an enormously powerful strategy for creating a cohesive and engaged performance.