

PERFORMANCE CRITERIA
For Jazz Ensemble, Combos and Jazz Choirs

TECHNICAL MERIT

“SUPERIOR” PERFORMANCE LEVEL

Rhythm/Precision: Superb control of pulse, tempo and rhythmic patterns. Ensemble cohesiveness is outstanding at all times. Precision and clarity are exemplary. Flaws, if any, are very minor and quickly corrected.

Articulation: Outstanding and comprehensive knowledge of articulation styles and techniques is demonstrated at all times. Wide variety of articulation played with excellent consistency and uniformity.

Facility: Technical facility is superb. Superior flexibility and dexterity exhibited by entire ensemble. Only minor flaws happen during the most demanding and complex passages. Concentration is superior, creating an extremely solid, polished performance.

Tone Quality: Achieves superlative tone quality. Tone is well focused, full, open, resonant, consistent and uniform in color. Utmost clarity is achieved.

Intonation: Instruments are tuned very well. Melodic and harmonic intonation is superior. Ability to control difficult tuning situations is well developed. Students perform with excellent control of pitch in all registers. Superior listening and adjusting skills are demonstrated.

“EXCELLENT” PERFORMANCE LEVEL

Rhythm/Precision: Rhythmic accuracy and precision are excellent. Pulse and tempo are under control most of the time: lapses are infrequent and usually happen in more difficult situations. Clarity and ensemble cohesiveness is excellent most of the time.

Articulation: Articulation technique is well developed. Thorough knowledge of articulation styles is demonstrated. Uniformity is very good with weaknesses only shown by individual performers during complex passages.

Facility: Technical facility is well developed. Manual dexterity is excellent. Flexibility is quite good. Difficult passages are well played with only minor flaws. Excellent concentration. Performers respond to the director very well.

Tone Quality: Excellent tone achieved most of the time. Lapse and problems are infrequent, usually caused by the most demanding musical passages. Individual problems are minor and quickly corrected. Tonal color, focus and timbre are uniform, consistent and well controlled, though adversely affected in extremes of volume and range. Tonal clarity achieved most of the time.

Intonation: Instruments are tuned very well. Melodic and harmonic intonation is very good. Problems sometimes occur in range and volume extremes and difficult passages and situations, but are of short duration and/or quickly corrected. Listening is very good, with good ability to correct most problems.

“GOOD” PERFORMANCE LEVEL

Rhythm/Precision: Rhythm accuracy, precision, note accuracy and understanding of subdivisions are good much of the time. Performers demonstrate good awareness of pulse and tempo although problems occur occasionally and may be difficult to overcome. Rhythmic patterns are interpreted correctly and uniformly much of the time. Problems occur with finer details of more complex rhythmic patterns and structures. Ensemble cohesiveness is good most of the time.

Articulation: Articulation technique and style are good most of the time. Styles performed uniformly much of the time, but lack complete consistency and accuracy. Complex articulations lack clarity and control.

Facility: Technical facility is good most of the time. Problems and breakdowns occur during difficult passages. Performers demonstrate a good degree of flexibility and dexterity. Correct technique usually demonstrated by many performers. Concentration is good but occasionally inconsistent. Performers pay attention to the director much of the time.

Tone Quality: Good basic approach demonstrated. Focus is good. Uniform texture and color is demonstrated in less demanding passages. Harshness and distortion are problems at upper volume levels and registers. Breath support is generally good but not always maintained.

Intonation: Instruments tuned relatively well. Intonation is often good, but with inconsistencies. Less demanding melodies, intervals and harmonic structures are performed successfully. Wide intervals, octaves, unisons are performed with partial success. Listening is good and attempts are made to correct obvious problems.

Technical Merit (cont.)

“FAIR” PERFORMANCE LEVEL

Rhythm/Precision: Basic rhythmic accuracy demonstrated in simple passages, although rapid or complex passages are weak. Rhythmic uniformity is inconsistent quite often. Precision achieved in simple passages. Pulse not always controlled; tempos not maintained at all times. Note accuracy is fair.

Articulation: Articulation technique is correct some of the time. Articulation styles are accurate and uniform some of the time.

Facility: Technical facility is fair. Flexibility and dexterity are persistent problems. Faster, more complex passages tax players beyond their ability. Good technique is demonstrated by some performers. Concentration seems to drift. Performers pay some attention to the director.

Tone Quality: Basic understanding of tone quality concepts not yet developed throughout the ensemble. Some individuals demonstrate good tone production. Volume and register extremes not controlled well, often harsh. Focus and resonance achieved occasionally. Uniformity of color and texture is weak. Breath support is often weak and inconsistent.

Intonation: Instruments are somewhat in tune. Melodic and harmonic intonation is inconsistent. Difficult intervals and harmonic structures are major intonation weaknesses. Individual and sectional intonation problems are seldom corrected..

“NEEDS IMPROVEMENT” PERFORMANCE LEVEL

Rhythm/Precision: Rhythmic accuracy and precision are weak. Pulse is poorly controlled. Uniformity is lacking. Note accuracy is weak.

Articulation: Articulation technique not yet developed. Performers exhibit poor clarity and accuracy. Articulation styles neglected most of the time.

Facility: Technical facility is poor. Finger dexterity is undeveloped. Knowledge of fingerings is lacking. Concentration is poor. There is very little attention to the director.

Tone Quality: Little understanding of basic concepts of tone production. Poor air support, embouchures contribute to tone that is thin, airy, dull, harsh at upper volumes and registers, fuzzy at lower volumes and registers.

Intonation: Instruments not tuned well. Melodic and harmonic intonation is weak. Few attempts are made to correct problems.

ARTISTIC MERIT

“SUPERIOR” PERFORMANCE LEVEL

Balance/Blend: Superior blend and balance maintained at all times, both within and between sections. Tonal blend is uniform and consistent. Extremes in register and volume do not detract from superior blend and balance. Quality is characteristic of the best ensemble sound. Superior listening is demonstrated at all times.

Interpretation/Style: Thorough and stylistically valid interpretation at all times. Uniformity of style is consistent at all times. Performers exhibit a thorough understanding of style, tempos and interpretation.

Phrasing/Expression: Phrasing is always natural and uniformly played by all sections and individuals. Performers exhibit clear, meaningful and expressive shaping of musical phrases at all times. Expression is natural. The performance is sensitive and highly effective.

Dynamics: Superior dynamic range with excellent control at all levels. The performance exhibits thorough use of all dynamic levels with excellent dynamic sensitivity.

“EXCELLENT” PERFORMANCE LEVEL

Balance/Blend: Excellent blend and balance established and maintained most of the time. Tonal blend is almost always uniform and consistent. Balance between and within sections is very good most of the time. Problems occur only during the most difficult passages and are usually short in duration. Lapses are infrequent and generally minor. Characteristic ensemble sound fully achieved most of the time. Overall listening skills are well developed.

Interpretation/Style: Good uniform and meaningful interpretation most of the time. Some passages may be lacking in interpretation, but do not detract from the otherwise excellent performance. Stylistic accuracy is good most of the time. Tempos are accurate and consistent stylistically.

Artistic Merit (cont.)

Phrasing/Expression: Phrasing is thorough and natural most of the time. Uniformity of phrasing is consistent throughout most of the performance. Expressive shaping of phrases and passages is very good with only occasional lapses. Expression is seldom mechanical or contrived.

Dynamics: Good use of dynamics throughout the performance with some lack of dynamic control. Good “ff’s” and “pp’s”, but full dynamic range is not completely explored. Overall performance is expressive, sensitive and tasteful most of the time.

“GOOD” PERFORMANCE LEVEL

Balance/Blend: Good balance and blend, though at times sections and/or individuals tend to dominate the sound. Less demanding passages have good blend, balance and voice relationships. Problems occur during extremes in volumes, and/or range, dynamic changes, dense harmonic structures, etc. Clarity is good but sometimes lacking. Good characteristic ensemble sound usually achieved. Good overall listening skills often demonstrated.

Interpretation/Style: Students exhibit meaningful and uniform interpretation some of the time. Style is good some of the time, but can often be rigid and mechanical. Stylistic accuracy is demonstrated at times. Tempos are consistent and accurate some of the time.

Phrasing/Expression: Phrasing is basic, uniform and somewhat consistent some of the time although not always natural; often mechanical. Dynamic shaping of phrases is sometimes apparent.

Dynamics: Some successful attempts at basic dynamic variation though limited in scope and range. Lower dynamic levels not well used. Upper dynamic levels not always performed tastefully.

“FAIR” PERFORMANCE LEVEL

Balance Blend: Blend and balance is sometimes achieved during less demanding passages. Faster, louder and higher passages are not well balanced. Individual performers and/or sections tend to dominate the ensemble’s sound most of the time. Good characteristic ensemble sound seldom achieved. Listening and attentiveness are inconsistent; often neglected.

Interpretation/Style: Little meaningful interpretation of musical passages. Style is undeveloped and inconsistent. Tempos are inconsistent.

Phrasing/Expression: Mostly mechanical and non-musical. Performers exhibit very little uniformity. Some attempts at expressing melodic lines, but with rigid and mechanical results.

Dynamics: Some attempts at altering dynamics, but with limited range. Dynamic changes are not well controlled and lack uniformity.

“NEEDS IMPROVEMENT” PERFORMANCE LEVEL

Balance/Blend: Blend and balance between and within sections not achieved most of the time. General listening skills not yet developed.

Interpretation/Style: Very little meaningful interpretation.

Phrasing/Expression: No uniformity of phrasing and expression is almost non-existent.

Dynamics: Very little use of dynamics.

SOLO/IMPROVISATION

“SUPERIOR” PERFORMANCE LEVEL

Style/Harmonic Content: The soloists perform demonstrate at a high level their ability to comprehend the particular style of the selection they are performing as well as a strong knowledge of the harmonic progression of the selection.

Ability to create personal musical statements: The majority of soloists are capable of bringing their own personal interpretation of the music in a mature presentation.

Variety of soloists: The performance presents a significant number of soloists at varying levels of competency.

Opportunity for Improvisation: The program as presented allows substantial opportunity for improvisational solos and the ensemble take full advantage of the opportunity.

Technique/Interpretation: Soloists demonstrate complete command of the music fundamentals required to maturely improvise. Stylistic and historical knowledge of the music performed is highly evident.

Precision-Notes/Rhythm: Notes and rhythms are exactly correct for the selection performed.

Facility/Style: Soloists demonstrate complete command of their instrument and the style of the selection performed.

Solo/Improvisation (cont.)

“EXCELLENT” PERFORMANCE LEVEL

Style/Harmonic Content: Most of the soloists demonstrate the ability to comprehend the particular style and harmonic knowledge of the selection

Ability to create personal musical statements: Many of the soloists demonstrate the ability to bring a personal interpretation of the music to their solo(s).

Variety of soloists: The performance allows the opportunity for several performers in solo situations.

Opportunity for Improvisation: The program as presented allows ample opportunity for improvisation and the performers avail themselves of the opportunity.

Technique/Interpretation: An excellent awareness of music fundamentals required to improvise is evident. Stylistic and historic knowledge of the music performed is evident.

Precision-Notes/Rhythm: The majority of the notes and rhythms are correct for the musical selection performed

Facility/Style: Soloists demonstrate an impressive command of their instrument and of the style of the selection performed.

“GOOD” PERFORMANCE LEVEL

Ability to create personal musical statements: Several of the soloists demonstrate some ability to comprehend the particular style and harmonic content of the selection.

Variety of soloists: A minimal number of performers are given the opportunity to solo.

Opportunity for Improvisation: The program as presented has some opportunity for improvised solos but the opportunity for solos could have been given stronger emphasis.

Technique/Interpretation: Considerable awareness of the music fundamentals required to improvise is evident, however, there is a lack of stylistic and historical knowledge of the music performed.

Precision-Notes/Rhythm: There is noticeable incorrectness of notes and rhythms used for the selections performed.

Facility/Style: A lack of command of their instrument or style of the selection performed affected the solo.

“FAIR” PERFORMANCE LEVEL

Style/Harmonic Content: Soloists demonstrate little knowledge of the particular style and harmonic content of the selection.

Ability to create personal musical statements: Soloist(s) do not demonstrate the ability to take ownership of their solo(s) and tend to struggle with performing the solos with some accuracy.

Variety of soloists: The bare minimum of solos are presented with generally only one or two performers soloing.

Opportunity for Improvisation: The program as presented showed little or no opportunity for improvised solos.

Technique/Interpretation: Soloist(s) lacked the music fundamentals and/or stylistic and historic knowledge to correctly perform the selected music.

Precision-Notes/Rhythm: Incorrect notes and rhythm take away any effectiveness of the solo.

Facility/Style: A lack of command of their instrument or style of the selection(s) performed greatly affected the solos(s)

“NEEDS IMPROVEMENT” PERFORMANCE LEVEL

Style/Harmonic Content: Soloists do not present any knowledge of style and/or harmonic content.

Ability to create personal musical statements: Soloist(s), if any, struggle with performing with accuracy of notes and rhythm.

Variety of soloists: Only one, if any, soloists are presented in the ensemble's performance.

Opportunity for Improvisation: The program as presented did not contain any opportunity for improvised solos.

Technique/Interpretation: Some students are in an unfair position to be placed as soloists, due to lack of technique and/or musical interpretation.

Precision-Notes/Rhythm: Most notes and rhythms are inaccurate, negatively affecting the solo.

Facility/Style: Due to lack of background, student is placed in an unfair position.

PROGRAMMING/PRESENTATION

“SUPERIOR” PERFORMANCE LEVEL

Choice of Music: Literature performed is appropriate for the festival and aesthetically pleasing. Programming is both effective and of varied styles and periods. Music performed challenges the group musically and intellectually, yet is within their capabilities given musical skills demonstrated.

Appearance: Appearance is uniform and neat. Group approaches and exits the performance area in a prideful, poised and orderly manner. Individuals remain focused and confidently attentive throughout the performance.

Preparation: The ensemble presents a well practiced and rehearsed performance. Attention to detail is obvious and demonstrates significant thought and coordination.

“EXCELLENT” PERFORMANCE LEVEL

Choice of Music: Literature performed is appropriate for the festival and aesthetically pleasing but programming lacks variety because of stylistic issues, such as variety in time period or form. Most of the music performed is within the capabilities of the group given musical skills demonstrated.

Appearance: Appearance is generally uniform and neat. Group approaches and exits the performance area generally in a prideful, poised and orderly manner. Most individuals remain focused and confidently attentive throughout the performance.

Preparation: Many of the performers appear to be well prepared but the ensemble needs continued rehearsal time in order to complete a polished level of performance.

“GOOD” PERFORMANCE LEVEL

Choice of Music: Not all literature performed is appropriate for the festival because of difficulty level for the group and/or style of music.

Appearance: Appearance of some individuals distracted from the group. Some individuals lost focus and attentiveness to the event at hand.

Preparation: The performance lacks the individual attention to detail and performance polish that more time and effort would allow.

“FAIR” PERFORMANCE LEVEL

Choice of Music: Most of the literature performed was not appropriate for the festival because of the difficulty level for the group, lacks stylist contrast or not appropriate for festival performance.

Appearance: Appearance, lack of focus and attentiveness distracted measurably from the performance.

Preparation: Individual performers lack the ability to perform their parts with polish and clarity.

“NEEDS IMPROVEMENT” PERFORMANCE LEVEL

Choice of Music: Literature was completely inappropriate to the festival because of difficulty and/or style.

Appearance: A general impression of lack of pride emanates from the group because of appearance or complete lack of focus and attentiveness to the event at hand.

Preparation: Many performers need more time and effort on their individual parts in order to present a polished performance.