

# AN UNINTENDED LANGUAGE BARRIER: AN EXAMINATION OF BIG BAND JAZZ PEDAGOGY AT THE COLLEGIATE LEVEL

**Jazz is an aural tradition:** The performance practices associated with jazz are passed down from generation to generation through mentoring and experience.



Photo Credit: Shutterstock, Dec. 2021

The push for the inclusion of jazz pedagogy within the realm of the academy at large by proponents like David Baker and John Lewis resulted in the establishment of the first written teaching materials which students could use to relate to the jazz idiom regardless of their training or background.

This language barrier is being exacerbated by the inadequate training of pre-service music educators. Less than 2% of an average music education curriculum even includes any type of exposure to jazz, let alone training in jazz pedagogy.

Name of Institution	Location	Program Title	Total Jazz: Required	Jazz: Optional	Maximum % J. Jazz Track Offered?	Minnesota (U.of)	Minneapolis, Minnesota	BM: Music Education	120 0 Credits	7 Cr. Ens	6% Total	No
Auburn University	Auburn, Alabama	Bachelor of Music Ed. Instrumental	128 0 Credits	3-4 Credits Ens.	3.1% Total	No	Missouri (U.of)	BM: Music Education	131 1 Cr. (Jazz Methods)	8 Cr. (1 Cr. + 7 Ens.)	6.25% Total	No
Berklee College of Music	Boston, Massachusetts	Bachelor of Music: Music Ed.	131 0 Credits	4 Cr. Ens.	3% Total	Yes	MO- Kansas City (U.of)	Bach. of Music Education	134 4 Cr. (Jazz Methods)	10 Cr. (4 Req/6 Ens.)	7.5% Total	Yes
Boston University	Boston, Massachusetts	Bachelor of Music: Music Ed.	132 0 Credits	4 Cr. Methods	3% Total	No	Montana State University	Missoula, Montana	120 0 Credits	2 Cr. Ens.	2% Total	No
Central Michigan University	Mount Pleasant, Michigan	Bachelor of Music: Music Ed.	147 0 Credits	2 Cr. Ensemble	1.5% Total	Yes	New Mexico (U.of)	Albuquerque, New Mexico	126 1 Cr. (Improv)	8 (7 Cr. Ens. + 1 Req.)	6.3% Total	No
Clemson University	Clemson, South Carolina	Bachelor of Music: Music Ed.	121 0 Credits	4 Cr. Ensemble	3.25% Total	No	New York University	New York, New York	183 0 Credits	6 Cr. Ens.	3.5% Total	Yes
Colorado	Boulder, Colorado	Bach. of Music Education	126 2 Cr. Jazz Methods	2 Cr. Ens.	3.25% Total	Yes	North Carolina (U.of)	Chapel Hill, North Carolina	120 0 Credits	4 Cr. Ensemble	3.5% Total	Yes
Eastman School of Music	Rochester, New York	Bachelor of Music: Mus. Ed. Inst.	147 0 Credits	4 Cr. Harmony/Improv	2.7% Total	Yes	North Dakota State University	Fargo, North Dakota	125 0 Credits	9 Cr. Ens.	7.25% Total	No
Florida (U.of)	Gainesville, Florida	BM: Music Education	125 0 Credits	4-6 Cr. Ens.	4.85% Total	No	Northern Michigan University	Marquette, Michigan	130 0 Credits	4 Cr. Ens.	3% Total	No
Florida State University	Tallahassee, Florida	BME: Instrumental	134 0 Credits	4 Cr. Ensemble	3% Total	No	NV- Las Vegas (U.of)	Las Vegas, Nevada	120 0 Credits	6 Cr. (Arranging, Harmony, Imprx)	5% Total	Yes
George Mason University	Fairfax, Virginia	BM: Music Education	120 3 Cr. Jazz Methods	3 Cr. Ens.	5% Total	Yes	Ohio State University	Columbus, Ohio	128 0 Credits	4 Cr. Ens.	3.25% Total	No
Georgia (U.of)	Athens, Georgia	Bach. Music Education	128 0 Credits	6 Cr. (Jazz hist/ Jazz ped/ Ens.)	4.8% Total	No	Oklahoma State University	Stillwater, Oklahoma	128 0 Credits	2 Cr. Jazz Arranging	1.6% Total	No
Illinois (U.of)	Champaign, Illinois	Bach. Music Education	130 0 Credits	2 Cr. (Jazz Aural Skills)	1.5% Total	Yes	Peabody Conservatory	Baltimore, Maryland	131 0 Credits	4 Cr. Ens.	3% Total	Yes
Indiana State University	Terre Haute, Indiana	BM: Music Education	133 0 Credits	4 (2 Cr. Ens./2 Cr. Methods)	3% Total	No	Penn State University	State College, Pennsylvania	120 0 Credits	9 Cr. (2 Improv/7 Ens.)	7.5% Total	Yes
Indiana University	Bloomington, Indiana	Bach. of Music Education	120 0 Credits	4 Cr. Ens.	3.5% Total	Yes	Rider University	Lawrence, Pennsylvania	131 0 Credits	6 Cr. Ens.	4.5% Total	No
Iowa (U.of)	Iowa City, Iowa	BM: Music Education	122 2 Cr. (Jazz Rhythms/Jazz Tech)	2 Cr.	1.75% Total	Yes	Rowan University	Glassboro, New Jersey	135 0 Credits	1 Cr. Ens.	8% Total	No
Iowa State University	Ames, Iowa	Bach. of Arts: Music Education	120 0 Credits	5 Cr. Ens.	4.25% Total	No	Rutgers University	New Brunswick, New Jersey	129 0 Credits	3-4 Cr. Ens.	3.1% Total	No
Ithaca College	Ithaca, New York	BM: Music Education	124.5 0 Credits	5 Cr. Ens.	4% Total	No	South Florida (U.of)	Tampa, Florida	120 0 Credits	4-6 Cr. Ens.	5% Total	Yes
Marian University	Indianapolis, Indiana	BA: Music Education	131 2 Cr. Jazz Methods	2 Cr. Ens.	3% Total	No	SUNY Potsdam	Potsdam, New York	124.5 0 Credits	3 Cr. Elective	2.5% Total	No
Maryland (U.of)	College Park, Maryland	BM: Music Education	145 Not Listed	Not Listed	N/A	Yes	Temple University	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania	128 2 Cr. Jazz Ed.	7 Cr. Ens.	7% Total	Yes
Massachusetts (U.of)	Amherst, Massachusetts	BM: Music Education	135 0 Credits	4 Cr. Ens.	3% Total	No	University of the Arts	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania	120 0 Credits	6 Cr. Ens.	5% Total	Yes
Michigan (U.of)	Ann Arbor, Michigan	BM: Inst. Music Education	130 0 Credits	4 Cr. Jazz General	3% Total	Yes	Utah (U.of)	Salt Lake City, Utah	133 0 Credits	7 Cr. Ens.	5.5% Total	No
Michigan State University	East Lansing, Michigan	BM: Music Education	130 0 Credits	2 Cr. Methods	2% Total	No	Washington (U.of)	Seattle, Washington	180 0 Credits	3 Cr. Ens.	1.75% Total	Yes
Excerpt from A. Signor, Dissertation (Indiana University) "A Glossary of Big Band Terminology 1957-75" Appendix 2.							Western Michigan University	Kalamazoo, Michigan	122 0 Credits	3-8 Cr. Ens.	5% Total	Yes
							Western Virginia University	Morgantown, West Virginia	151 0 Credits	7 Cr. Ens.	4.5% Total	Yes
							Wisconsin (U.of)	Madison, Wisconsin	130 0 Credits	6 Cr. Ens.	4.75% Total	Yes
							Wright State University	Dayton, Ohio	129 2 Cr. (Jazz Methods)	9 Cr. (7 Cr. Ens. + 2 Cr.)	7% Total	No

**Part I**  
**THE BEBOP SCALES**

From the early 1920s, jazz musicians attempted to make their improvised lines flow more smoothly by connecting scales and scale tones through the use of chromatic passing tones. In a detailed analysis of more than 500 solos by the acknowledged giants from Louis Armstrong through Lester Young and Coleman Hawkins, one is aware, first, of the increased use of scales (as opposed to arpeggios and chord outlines) and then the increasing use of chromaticism within these scales. An unusual fact about this increased chromaticism is that, despite the frequent re-occurrence of certain licks or patterns, no discernible design with regard to how the extra chromatic tones are added emerges. The overall impression is a somewhat arbitrary or random use of chromaticism.

When one listens to the great players from the distant and near past, one of the main things that tends to "date" their playing (aside from technological improvements in recording techniques, changes with regard to harmonic and rhythmic formulae, etc.) is this lack of unanimity with regard to the use of melodic chromaticism.

From his earliest recordings Charlie Parker can be observed groping for a method for making the modes of the major scale sound less awkward and for rendering them more conducive to swing and forward motion. Gradually, in a systematic and logical way, he began using certain scales with added chromatic tones. Dizzy, approaching the scales from an entirely different direction, began utilizing the same techniques for transforming them. These scales became the backbone of all jazz from bebop to modal music.

A study of a large number of representative solos from the bebop era yields a set of very complex governing rules that have now been internalized and are a part of the language of all good players in the bebop and post-bebop tradition. Very simply stated, the added chromatic tones make the scales "come out right." Play a descending mixolydian scale and then play the bebop version of the scale and see how much smoother the second scale moves.

F<sub>7</sub> (C-)

mixolydian

F<sub>7</sub> (C-)

bebop

Additionally, the commercial publishing of music specifically for educational big bands in the 1970's and 1980's further codified the written approach to learning jazz performance practices.

Excerpt from "Jazz Pedagogy" by David Baker, 1991.

There is now a need for a reference work which can bridge this gap for the modern music educator who will likely be required to teach jazz at the secondary level through the instruction of a big band- Thus "The Practical Guide to Big Band Terminology and Symbols" was written by A. Signor in the fall of 2021.

The Practical Guide to Big Band Terminology and Symbols  
A. Signor

### Examples of hand-written notation vs. modern notation:

**DURATION MARKS**

**Staccato Mark:**  
Also: "dot" "dot"

Circa 1960's:

Circa 2000's:

Ex. 9                      Ex. 10

When this marking is used over any duration of note, the player should play that note short and separated. In Big Band music, when this marking is seen over a series of eighth notes, it can mean to play the notes in a "straight" style rather than "swing." If a staccato marking is intended this way, it may also be accompanied by a written indication of whether the eighths should be straight as follows: *St.8, Straight, Straight 8ths*

Ex. 11:

**Legato Mark:**  
Also: "long mark"

Circa 1960's:

Circa 2000's:

Ex. 12                      Ex. 13

This mark is used liberally throughout Big Band music and is interpreted in much the same way as it would be in Western Art Music; the player should play the note full value but with no accent.

Excerpts from "The Practical Guide to Big Band Terminology and Notation" A. Signor, publisher TBA.

**Long Fall:**

Circa 1960's:

Circa 2000's:

Ex. 26                      Ex. 27

A long fall is executed using the same mechanics as the *short fall* but instead of being quick to decay, the fall is extended for the duration of the note specified or to the beat to which the wavy line is connected.

**Gliss:**  
Also: *Glissando*

Circa 1960's:

Circa 2000's:

Ex. 28                      Ex. 29

This expression can be used to move up or down between pitches; it is executed using similar mechanics as the long fall- bending the note using the embouchure or strings or halving the note into place. This marking is most often seen in trombone parts as it is most idiomatic for that instrument but is often used in other parts to yield the same effect.

**Rip:**

Circa 1960's:

Circa 2000's:

Ex. 30                      Ex. 31

The rip can be thought of as the same expression as the *Short Fall* but in reverse- instead of bending away from a given pitch and decaying quickly, the player should start producing sound from below the written pitch and quickly crescendo while bending up to the pitch indicated at the end of the line or wavy line.



The Count Basie Orchestra from: <https://www.thecountbasieorchestra.com/>

Over the course of the next four decades with the advent of programs like Finale and Sibelius, the prevalence of hand-written music being distributed to students for performance began to dwindle until a language barrier emerged: The modern student is nearly incapable of reading hand-written notation.

**CONCLUSION:** *If we hope to preserve American Big Band performance practices in an educational setting, we must train our pre-service teachers more thoroughly in the best practices for Jazz Pedagogy, make measurable efforts toward the re-inclusion of the aural tradition and continue the use of established written Jazz Pedagogy materials.*