



# **JAZZ PERFORMANCE CRITERIA**

Adopted: October, 2009

## **QUALITY OF SOUND**

### **"SUPERIOR" PERFORMANCE LEVEL**

**Tone Quality:** Achieves superlative tone quality. The ensemble clearly demonstrates tone that is well focused, full, open, resonant, consistent, uniform in color, texture and sonority. 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. Excellent control of pitch in all registers. Superior listening and adjusting skills.

**Blend/Balance:** 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.

### **"EXCELLENT" PERFORMANCE LEVEL**

**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 sometimes 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.

**Blend/Balance:** 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.

### **"GOOD" PERFORMANCE LEVEL**

**Tone Quality:** Good basic approach demonstrated. Focus is often good. Uniform texture and color is demonstrated in less demanding passages. Harshness and distortion are problems at upper volumes and registers. Fuzziness and/or lack of resonance are problems at softer volumes. Breath support is generally good, although 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; attempts are made to correct obvious problems.

**Blend/Balance:** Good blend and balance, 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.

### **"FAIR" PERFORMANCE LEVEL**

**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.

**Blend/Balance:** Blend and balance 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.

### **"NEEDS IMPROVEMENT" PERFORMANCE LEVEL**

**Tone Quality:** Little understanding of basic concepts of tone production. Poor air support and/or embouchures contribute to tone that is non-characteristic at upper volumes and registers, unclear at lower volumes and registers.

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

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

## TECHNIQUE

### “SUPERIOR” PERFORMANCE LEVEL

**Rhythm/Precision/Feel:** Superb control of pulse, tempo and rhythmic patterns. The ensemble clearly demonstrates cohesiveness. Precision and clarity are exemplary. Flaws, if any, are very minor and quickly corrected. Rhythm section cohesion is exceptional.

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

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

### “EXCELLENT” PERFORMANCE LEVEL

**Rhythm/Precision/Feel:** 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. Rhythm section cohesion is very good.

**Articulation:** Articulation 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 performed well with only minor flaws. Excellent concentration. Performers respond to director very well.

### “GOOD” PERFORMANCE LEVEL

**Rhythm/Precision/Feel:** Rhythm accuracy, precision, note accuracy and understanding of subdivisions 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. Rhythm section cohesion is good with lapses in consistency and feel.

**Articulation:** Articulation 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.

### “FAIR” PERFORMANCE LEVEL

**Rhythm/Precision/Feel:** 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 fair. Rhythm section cohesion is inconsistent.

**Articulation:** Articulation 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.

### “NEEDS IMPROVEMENT” PERFORMANCE LEVEL

**Rhythm/Precision/Feel:** Rhythmic accuracy and precision are weak. Pulse is poorly controlled. Uniformity is lacking. Note accuracy is weak. Rhythm section cohesion is not present.

**Articulation:** Articulation not yet developed. 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. Very little attention to the director.

# MUSICALITY

## “SUPERIOR” PERFORMANCE LEVEL

**Interpretation/Style:** Thorough and stylistically valid interpretation at all times. The ensemble clearly demonstrates uniformity of style. Performers exhibit a thorough understanding of style, tempos and interpretation, and successfully communicate this knowledge throughout the performance.

**Phrasing:** Phrasing is always natural, idiosyncratic and uniformly performed by all sections and individuals.

**Expression:** Clear, meaningful and expressive shaping of musical phrases at all times. Expression is natural, sensitive and highly effective. Communication is superior throughout.

**Sensitivity:** Superior demonstration of use of artistic subtleties. Sensitivity is achieved throughout the performance.

**Dynamics:** Superior dynamic range with excellent control of all levels. Thorough use of all dynamic levels with excellent dynamic sensitivity. Superior use of musical techniques to create a sensitive, effective, naturally communicated artistic performance.

## “EXCELLENT” PERFORMANCE LEVEL

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

**Phrasing:** Phrasing is natural and idiosyncratic most of the time. Uniformity of phrasing is consistent throughout most of the performance.

**Expression:** Expressive shaping and contouring of phrases and passages is very good with only occasional lapses. Expression is seldom mechanical or contrived. Communication is very good most of the time.

**Sensitivity:** Excellent use of accents, stress and flexibility in phrasing to create a free-flowing performance most of the time. Good demonstration of skills necessary to transcend technical and mechanical aspects creating artistic results most of the time.

**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. Overall communication of musical ideas is very good.

## “GOOD” PERFORMANCE LEVEL

**Interpretation/Style:** 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 stylistically accurate some of the time.

**Phrasing:** Phrasing is basic, uniform and somewhat consistent some of the time although not always natural and idiosyncratic, often mechanical.

**Expression:** Dynamic shaping and contouring of phrases is sometimes apparent. Communication is occasionally good, but with many lapses.

**Sensitivity:** Good use of accents and stress at times, but not always consistent. Some demonstration of ability to perform beyond technical and mechanical aspects to create an aesthetic product.

**Dynamics:** Some successful attempts at basic dynamic variation though limited in scope and range. Lower dynamic levels not used well. Upper dynamic levels not always performed tastefully. Performers demonstrate some knowledge of artistic concepts, but with incomplete success.

## “FAIR” PERFORMANCE LEVEL

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

**Phrasing:** Mostly mechanical and non-musical. Very little uniformity.

**Expression:** Some attempts at expressing melodic lines, but with rigid, mechanical and uncomfortable results.

**Sensitivity:** Little use of accents & stress. Little ability to perform beyond technical and mechanical aspects of music.

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

## “NEEDS IMPROVEMENT” PERFORMANCE LEVEL

**Interpretation/Style:** Very little meaningful interpretation.

**Phrasing:** No uniformity in phrasing.

**Expression:** Expression is almost non-existent.

**Sensitivity:** Lack of confidence is overriding any attempts at a sensitive performance.

**Dynamics:** Very little use of dynamics.

## IMPROVISATION

### **“SUPERIOR” PERFORMANCE LEVEL**

**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 rhythm are exemplary for the musical selection performed. Soloists demonstrate a well-defined understanding of harmony and chord progressions.

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

### **EXCELLENT” PERFORMANCE LEVEL**

**Technique/Interpretation:** An excellent awareness of music fundamentals required to improvise is evident. Stylistic and historical knowledge of the music performed is evident. Soloists demonstrate a very good awareness of harmony and chord progressions.

**Precision-Notes/Rhythm:** The majority of the notes and rhythm 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**

**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. Soloists demonstrate a moderate awareness of harmony and chord progressions.

**Precision-Notes/Rhythm:** There is a noticeable incorrectness of notes and rhythm used for the selection performed.

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

### **“FAIR” PERFORMANCE LEVEL**

**Technique/Interpretation:** Soloist lacked the music fundamentals and/or stylistic and historical knowledge to correctly perform selected music. Soloists demonstrate a very little awareness of harmony and chord progressions.

**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 performed greatly affects the solo.

### **“NEEDS IMPROVEMENT” PERFORMANCE LEVEL**

**Technique/Interpretation:** Student is in an unfair position to be placed as a soloist, due to lack of technique and/or musical interpretation. Soloists demonstrate virtually no awareness of harmony and chord progressions.

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

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

## OTHER FACTORS

### **“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.

**Attentiveness/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 event.

### **“EXCELLENT” PERFORMANCE LEVEL**

**Choice of Music:** Literature performed is appropriate to 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.

**Attentiveness/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 attentive throughout event.

### **“GOOD” PERFORMANCE LEVEL**

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

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

### **“FAIR” PERFORMANCE LEVEL**

**Choice of Music:** Most of the literature performed was not appropriate to the festival because of difficulty, lacks stylistic contrast or not appropriate for festival performance.

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

### **“NEEDS IMPROVEMENT” PERFORMANCE LEVEL**

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

**Attentiveness/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.