

Public Abstract

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Title:DEVELOPMENT AND VALIDATION OF A RATING SCALE FOR WIND JAZZ IMPROVISATION PERFORMANCE

Jazz education in America has progressed steadily since its beginnings in the mid 1940s (Abeles, Hoffer, & Klotman, 1995). Over recent years, jazz as an academic discipline has grown in volume and stature. As a consequence, the issue of creating and maintaining reliable and valid jazz performance assessment procedures is imperative to the success of any jazz education program. The purpose of this study was to develop a valid and reliable rating scale designed to evaluate the improvisation ability of collegiate wind instrumentalists. Statements descriptive of instrumental wind jazz improvisation were collected from interviews of jazz performers, evaluation forms, previous research, and prose written by jazz musicians. This information was analyzed for redundancy and clarity and reduced to 14 total items. The statements were randomly phrased positively and negatively and paired with a seven-point Likert-type scale and collectively named the Wind Jazz Improvisation Evaluation Scale (WJIES). Five wind jazz students and one professional jazz educator were asked to record two improvisations—two choruses of Bb blues and one chorus of Killer Joe accompanied by an Aebersold play-along compact disc. Sixty-three adjudicators with varying degrees of jazz experience evaluated the 12 improvisations using the WJIES. The WJIES proved to be a consistent and valid measure of wind jazz improvisation. The findings of this study have broad implications that may be of particular interest to music educators. The results indicate that the facet-rational approach is an effective method of developing a rating scale for collegiate wind jazz improvisation performance. Outcomes also suggest that: (a) advanced jazz improvisation is closely related to elements associated with creativity and expression, and (b) adjudicators might benefit from structured training sessions prior to judging jazz improvisation performance.