

Benefits of Playing Jazz...Beyond the Music

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In addition to the plethora of studies that are showing us the benefits of a music education on our brains, bodies, academic success, etc., the great musician and educator Dave Liebman expressed some of the benefits of learning jazz in an article published by Jazz Times <http://jazztimes.com/articles/55614-jazz-education-in-the-century-of-change-beyond-the-music> Here are some of the highlights of his findings:

What values and/or skills have our students learned through the study of music, of jazz specifically, that will be of use in the world and life they will most likely encounter? I have enumerated what I consider these core values to be using my personal concepts, all of which can easily be described in multiple ways.

BEYOND THE MUSIC

Jazz skill (learned): Spontaneous improvisation.

Life skill (transferred): The level of personal honesty that an individual brings to a playing situation is a given since there is nowhere to hide when improvising in the jazz tradition. Who you are and what you represent go beyond the here and now touching upon deep philosophical and spiritual aspects of being alive.

Key concept: **Honesty**

Jazz skill: Soloing.

Life skill: Having the ability and attitude necessary to assume leadership, meaning to take charge when and if required; also to hand over leadership unconditionally when the situation calls for it.

Key concept: **Leadership and follower abilities**

Jazz skill: Soloing as a "multitasking" activity.

Life skill: Dealing with a lot of information quickly; ability to integrate and synthesize information in a creative fashion.

Key concept: **Clarity of thought**

Jazz skill: Learning from mentors.

Life skill: Being able to learn from older mentors by graciously accepting their wisdom as a vital part of the learning process. This implies suspension of judgment as to the immediate personal value of the material offered.

Concept: **Experiential learning**

Jazz skill: Participating in a group effort through ensemble collaboration.

Life skill: Maintaining an open and respectful attitude towards other group members by working with them as peers, regardless of

age, gender, proficiency level, nationality, religion, race, etc. This infers that being better at a task does not mean personal superiority or the opposite.

Key concept: **Mutual respect**

Jazz skill: Realizing one's unique "voice."

Life skill: By honing one's own vision, the individual assumes an active role towards changing and improving a given situation by offering unique and personal ideas towards that end. This involves critical and creative thinking, honest self-evaluation, much discipline and a desire to change one's status quo towards discovering a better way to accomplish something.

Key concept: **Clarity of vision**

Jazz skill: Knowing the "standard" repertoire (history and traditions) as it is along with the desire and ability to vary these set directives in creative and multiple ways, both spontaneously as well as pre-planned.

Life skill: Being able to adjust and change direction in a situation already framed by a given set of rules and conditions which may or may not encourage new discoveries and innovation; seizing the moment and affecting immediate change while at the same time being actively involved in the process itself; having the necessary confidence to accomplish this goal with the awareness that the final result might not be realized until later with no guarantees concerning the outcome.

Key concept: **Flexibility**

Jazz skill: To be able to "swing" meaning being part of the surrounding context ("groove").

Life skill: Being part of the creative process taking place; to energize and be energized by interacting with the involved parties towards realizing a goal; feeling a "joie du vivre" through being involved in a group effort.

Key concept: **Commitment**

Jazz skill: Composing original music, etc.

Life skill: Creating something new and/or modifying an already established tradition or practice based upon one's imagination, skills and experiences.

Key concept: **Individual creativity**

Jazz skill: Being in the moment, aware of what is happening around you (in a playing situation).

Life skill: An open attitude towards the new and unexpected without fear or immediate judgment; realizing that out of the old comes the new to be embraced and refined as befitting the specifics of a situation.

Key concept: **Awareness**

Jazz skill: Interaction on stage; communication with an audience; working within one's immediate musical community.

Life skill: Realizing your relationship to one's direct working and social environment, meaning the immediate group as well as society at large; the ability to see the "big" picture in both one's private and public life.

Key concept: **Citizenship**

Jazz skill: Being an entertainer and communicator.

Life skill: Realizing the social component and purpose of your work; the ability to offer one's ideas and creative work in a manner that will successfully convey ideas and concepts to a given audience for consideration.

Key concept: **Communication**

Jazz skill: Being an artist

Life skill: To recognize the deep intrinsic values of what one does in life on both a practical and spiritual level; communicating core universal values (truth, beauty, compassion, etc.) in a way that both educates and entertains.

Key concept: **Spirituality**

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