

11. SCORES USED IN BAND TEACHING. A TEACHING TECHNIQUE SUITED FOR ALL LEARNING STYLES

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Abstract: *If studying and teaching classical music relies a lot on the use of scores, the pop-rock-jazz genres have a different approach, from using a large variety of score-types to not using at all. Pupils from secondary schools and high schools practice pop-rock-jazz, either on their own or coordinated by a music teacher, in which case it is fairly expected for them to be familiarized with the types of scores that can be found in these genres. However, many band teachers prefer using demonstration as a method, some of them claiming that the scores limit the creativity. It is true that music notation in these genres is not standardized. In this article, we will cover the most common approaches for integrating music notation in jazz-pop-rock band teaching.*

Key words: *Band teaching, creativity, pedagogy, pop-rock, jazz*

1. Introduction

The term 'band teaching' translates as 'ensemble coordination pedagogy' and is taken from the practice of schools in Scandinavian countries (Denmark, Norway, Sweden). In Denmark, for example, jazz, pop and rock teaching has developed along the lines of the Berklee School in the USA, borrowing not only working methods but also terminology. Students at the Rhythmic Music Conservatory in Copenhagen (Denmark) are also familiar with methods of conducting jazz, pop and rock bands, and they become not only good instrumentalists, soloists or composers, but also teachers. The discipline of "Band teaching" is different from band activity ("Ensemble") and, in Romania, is still searching for its methods.

The first forms of teaching activities concerning the coordination of pop-rock-jazz bands by students have been taking shape in recent years (after 2010) in Romania, as an offer of non-formal education, in private clubs, popular art schools and Children's Palaces in Romania, this process being initiated since primary school in many cases. The study of these so-called entertainment genres has its own methods and must be approached by including in its teaching the standards of the field, in use since the first half of the 20th century in jazz bands. This article aims to present the types of scores used in the pop-rock-jazz genres, with the recommendation that they be progressively included in the work with children's bands, from the first year of study.

2. Chords distributed by verse (vers-acord)

This is the most common way of notating the harmony of a folk, pop or rock song, but also the most inaccurate. Ex.1²⁹

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²⁹ <https://tabs.ultimate-guitar.com/tab/grover-washington-jr-/just-the-two-of-us-chords-663141>

[Intro]

Cmaj7 B7 Em7 Dm7 G7 Cmaj7 B7 Em7

[Verse 1]

Cmaj7 B7 Em7
I see the crystal raindrops fall,
Dm7 G7 Cmaj7
and the beauty of it all
B7 Em7
Is when the sun comes shining through
Cmaj7 B7 Em7
To make those rainbows in my mind,
Dm7 G7 Cmaj7
When I think of you sometime,
B7 Em7
And I want to spend some time with you.

As can be seen, the harmony and form of the piece are noted, but not the distribution of chords by measure or the specific formulas that usually make the transition between sections. It is a functional way of notating folk/pop/rock music, and its functionality comes from the fact that it is based on the idea that the songs are known by hearing the instrumentalists and they already know details about meter, tempo, accompaniment formulas or specific rhythmic formulas.

3. Chords distributed by measure (measure-chord)

Another quick way to notate sheet music is with harmony (meter-distributed) fingering. It may also contain specific rhythmic formulas. The melodic line is not notated at all, but meter, tempo, style (musical genre or "swing" mention), tonality and harmony are, like the previous type of notation, based on the instrumentalists' familiarity with the piece. It is one of the first scores I use in ensemble classes, because the instrumentalists are functional from the first rehearsal. It is a type of score that I have used the most, as it is the easiest to understand even for students in lower grades (5th, 6th grade), which also motivates them to continue studying in bands. In the example below, I have also filled in the chords to help a beginner pianist play with the band after very few rehearsals.

To begin with, note names (C, D, E, F, G, A, B, C) can be used until students get used to American notation. The two can be used in parallel, and in time the standard one, related to the German one, will be used exclusively. The only reason for opting for the latter is that most of the material devoted to the pop/rock/jazz genres uses it and so students are prepared for what they will encounter in their musical lives later on. Ex. 2³⁰

The image shows a handwritten musical score for the piece "Un si de bien". It consists of three staves of piano accompaniment. The first staff is marked with a box labeled 'A' and contains chords A, A5+, and F#m. The second staff contains chords Bm, F#m, D, E, D, F#m, and Bm. The third staff is marked with a box labeled 'B' and contains chords A, A7, D, D5+, Bm, and Bm. The score is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#).

³⁰ Own transcription

4. Tablatura

The tablature notation system has a very old history, reaching its peak in the art of the Renaissance lyricists. It is based on a simple principle: each horizontal line corresponds to a guitar or bass guitar string, and on this line the position of the note to be played is indicated by numbers. It is a very efficient type of notation, which seems to be easier for student guitarists to apply than standard notation, but very difficult for non-guitarists to interpret. This is why tablature is often found in chord form at the beginning of verse-chord scores. Ex. 3³¹

I'll Be There For You
Words & Music by Michael Skloff, Allee Willis, Philip Solem,
David Crane, Marta Kauffman & Danny Wilde



5. Lead Sheet

This type of sheet music contains much more detail and is particularly common in the jazz genre. It can be seen that there are notations of meter, harmony, structure and, what differs from the previous examples, the melodic line and text of the piece. The whole form may be repeated several times or modified, depending on the vision of the person conducting the band or writing the arrangement. There are Real Books, books containing the best-known jazz and blues pieces, edited and published by prestigious publishers, and Fake Books, which contain transcriptions by jazz musicians, sometimes incomplete or with their own harmonization. Both versions contain lead sheet scores, but the latter are published unofficially, so no royalties are distributed from their sale. Ex.4³²

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AUTUMN LEAVES - JOSEPH KOOPMAN / JOHNNY MERCER / JACQUES PREVELET



6. Piano reduction

As the name implies, the piano reduction is a variation of the arrangement written for piano and voice or piano solo. The advantages are numerous: in addition to the form, meter, tonality, harmonic structure (fingering) and even the recommended chord positions (voicings), the bass guitar parts (in the key of F) and counterpoint moments are also precisely written. This is one of the scores recommended for 7th and 8th grades, but it also depends on the level of involvement and experience of the band members. We also had a 6th grade band that preferred

³¹ score acquired from virtualsheetmusic.com

³² <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/351632683398786284/>

this type of score. Ready written sheet music for bass guitar is a great support for the teacher and this kind of sheet music is very common. There is also the presence of ciphers, with tabs specifying exactly how the chords should be played on the guitar. The rhythmic formulas in the left hand, in the key of F, are also a very good clue for the rhythmic punctuations the drummer has to make, as can be seen in measure 4 in the example below. There are many such scores circulating on the internet, some can be bought and some can be downloaded for free.³³ Ex.5

The image shows a musical score for the song 'Unchain My Heart'. The top part is a piano accompaniment marked 'Moderately' with a dynamic marking of 'mf'. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff with a melody and a bass clef staff with a bass line. The bottom part is a vocal line with lyrics: 'Some- one told me long a- go There's a calm be-fore the storm, I know,'. The vocal line is written on a single staff with a treble clef and includes a guitar cipher 'C' above the first measure.

7. Master Rhythm³⁴

This type of score is specific to professional ensembles (bands that provide music for events, bands on cruise ships) and is like a general score concentrated in an apparent piano reduction. Advanced students can work on such a score easily and also coordinate the band. It can be seen that the indications are much more detailed: attack manners, articulation, rhythmic formulas, timbres (Rock Piano), tempo changes, rhythmic guitar formulas (above the portative in the key of G), wind instrument interventions (Horns) and rhythmic patterns for the drums, written below the portative in the key of F. This type of score is of great help to the band coordinator. Thus, a piece proposed by the students can be approached in the first phase after the cipher, over which all the other elements are built, repetition by repetition. A Master Rhythm score helps the teacher to have the overall vision and to approach the arrangement by working on the same structure. It is also a very good lesson for more advanced students, who can apply the same way of working in their own compositions or in their own approaches to pieces they want to include in their repertoire. Ex.6

The image shows a handwritten 'Master Rhythm' score for the song 'Unchain My Heart'. The title 'MASTER RHYTHM' is written in all caps, and 'AS RECORDED BY JOE COCKER' is written in smaller caps to the right. The song title 'Unchain My Heart' is written in a cursive script. The score includes a key signature of 'Am' and a tempo marking 'RUBATO'. The music is written on two staves: a treble clef staff with a melody and a bass clef staff with a bass line. The score is heavily annotated with handwritten notes and symbols, including 'RUBATO', 'S.A.R.T.', 'GTR. SEE NOTE PAGE 2', and 'TRUMP/BASS'. The lyrics 'Some- one told me long a- go There's a calm be-fore the storm, I know,' are written below the melody. The score is numbered 1 and 2 at the bottom.

³³ <https://sheetmusic-free.com/>

³⁴ Score received from a professional pianist on a cruise ship. Author unknown

8. General Score

The general score is the most complex of those presented. General scores for bands exist, but must be ordered or purchased. For a teacher with only one band, this is not a problem, especially as parents need to be aware that these materials cost money, but often the cost of instruments is already high and sheet music, even if cheap, can seem like an expense that can be avoided. But for a teacher with three bands and up, each with at least three pieces in their repertoire, it adds up to a pretty big expense. And it can be avoided, in two ways:

- importing a MIDI file into a program that can turn the file into a score (Musescore, Cubase)
- transcribing the whole score, by hand or in software (Cubase, MuseScore)

I've worked with both and have come to the conclusion that the big drawback of the general score is the huge number of pages it can take, after all the optimizations. For the song "Walk of Life" by Dire Straits, I tried several versions:

1. Piano reduction: 2 pages, no guitar rhythm notation, no drum notation. Ex. 7³⁵

Fast
♩ = 176
E A
B E/G# A
1. 3. Here comes John - ny sing - ing
2. Here comes John - ny and he'll

2. General score resulting from importing a MIDI file into MuseScore: Since the optimizations were not quite handy, the score came out with one measure per page, at tempo 170bpm. Which meant that to coordinate the ensemble, the teacher had to turn the pages very fast and very often. The rhythmic formulas were written with unusual durations, making the score, overall, impractical and cumbersome. Even exporting the meters made it difficult for the students to follow. Ex. 8³⁶

Chit. El.
Chit. El.
B. El.
Set. perc.
Vir.

³⁵ <https://sheetmusic-free.com/walk-of-life-sheet-music-dire-straits/>

³⁶ Own variant, taken directly from the musescore program

3. Own arrangement

I made my own version, adapted to the possibilities of my students and the ensemble I was working with, in which I had two keyboard players. Although the score could still be improved, it was very useful even in this form and, after optimizations, I reduced it to 19 pages, with a clear structure, consuming comparably much time trying to transform the MIDI file into a score and then adapting that arrangement to the particularities of the ensemble. My own arrangement of Mark Knopfler's "Walk of life" was one of the pieces for which I used several types of scores, depending on the type of lesson that was required to cover the repertoire. Ex. 9³⁷

The image displays a musical score for the song "Walk of Life" by Mark Knopfler. The score is arranged for a multi-instrument ensemble and includes the following parts:

- Voice:** Features a vocal line with lyrics "U - hu!" and a melodic line with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 4/4. The score includes a 17-measure rest and a section marked "A".
- Org. (Organ):** Provides harmonic support with chords and melodic lines.
- Guitar:** Plays a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes.
- Bass:** Provides a steady bass line.
- Tobe (Tambourine):** Plays a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes.

The score is written in a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 4/4. It includes various musical notations such as rests, notes, and chords.

9. Conclusions

The teacher has to adapt according to the age and musical experience of the students, the time available to complete a piece, the type of repertoire and the purpose of the piece. A general score will not serve a beginner student well, obviously, but a Rhythm Master is helpful in making it easier for them to understand their role in the band. A Lead-Sheet is very useful for quick learning of pieces, but for folk repertoire this type of score does not exist and is time-consuming and of little benefit, with a verse-chord score being much more useful. Any of the sheet music types presented has its functionality, with creativity having a place even within the general score.

Although it may seem too technical or even sterile a topic, addressing how we integrate scores into our work with bands is of great importance to the complex development of the students we work with. The study of pop-rock/jazz genres has long since ceased to be just an enjoyable activity, but is a preparation for entry into the semi-professional scene for those we work with. Ignorance of scores or ignorance of specific notation types is unacceptable when working with bands, as graduating students will always be dependent on someone to show them how to play, so they will not be able to develop musical autonomy. As a teacher, it's an honor to see the students you've trained reach a level of proficiency that serves them well in any context, and anyone working in these newly emerging areas of the music education landscape should question whether they're really preparing their students to be active in the pop-rock-jazz scene after graduation.

³⁷ Own general score made in Cubase software

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