

Jazz Ensemble Classification Explained

Premise: In the past, one of the problems that prohibited this kind of ensemble was the difficulty of feeling that *Solo & Ensemble Contest* was not the place for this kind of music. Other concerns were (and still are) the format and accommodations for such groups, the problem of adjudication as performance standards are quite varied if not elusive, and the musical arrangements can be *all over the place* in terms of appropriate jazz styles for Contest. There are hybrids, fusions and crossovers to all kinds of jazz and rock music making style definitions or labels for what is appropriate almost impossible, but we have successfully been able to do this for many years and welcome them.

The Music: Mainstream swing or Latin jazz tune – This is what is intended with our Jazz Ensemble entry. This would eliminate any type of rock, fusion, country, or dozens of other styles. Swing or Latin seems to be the best way to begin to train young musicians to improvise. Other styles can be added but this definition will likely fit what music teachers are trying to do in their jazz classes.

The Ensemble: The Jazz Ensemble may not exceed eight (8) musicians. A vocalist in an instrumental group would be considered one of the eight. The ensemble should adhere to *the standard jazz combination of instruments or voices* (an ensemble of mostly guitars would not be acceptable). “Standard rhythm and horns” also describes what is intended here.

Improvisation: Beginning groups would be expected to do very little; advanced groups would do more. Various kinds of jazz articulations and rhythmic interpretations are appropriate.

Adjudication: In all other aspects of the performance, a *Jazz Ensemble Classification* would reflect the judging guidelines used to judge “classical” performances. Because of the necessity of establishing a firm understanding of classical rhythm in young students, only students in grades 7-12 are eligible to enter in the *Jazz Ensemble Classification*.

Procedure: The process for participation in this classification of contest ensemble would be the same as with a classical ensemble, with a few changes. The Jazz Ensemble will have approximately twenty minutes to set-up, tune, perform, and teardown. This entry will take place after lunch or end of day in the percussion room in order to provide the space and time needed. A digital piano will be provided.

Directors submitting a Jazz Ensemble entry should check the appropriate line on the standard registration form and attach a copy of the full score (save the original for the judge to use on Contest day).

Please submit questions to: Debbie Hunt
Phone: 440-324-317 | **Email:** hunt@esclc.org