

**THE WORSHIPFUL COMPANY OF MUSICIANS' COMPANY DEBATE**  
24.10.07 @ the Guildhall School of Music & Drama London

**“What is Jazz Becoming? – What is Becoming of Jazz?”**

Where is Jazz going?  
What is it becoming?  
Is what it is becoming 'Jazz'?  
Does Jazz education work?  
Do Jazz audiences get what they want?  
Will the market place determine who rises to the top?

Tony Dudley-Evans, promoter – ‘What the audience wants’  
Stuart Nicholson, journalist – ‘Is Jazz dead?’  
Tim Garland, composer, performer – ‘What is Jazz becoming?’  
Janine Irons, artist manager/producer – ‘What the market wants’  
Simon Purcell, musician, teacher – ‘What use is Jazz education?’

**What Use is Jazz Education?**

*“The teacher, like the artist and the philosopher, can perform his work adequately only if he feels himself to be an individual directed by an inner creative impulse, not dominated and fettered by an outside authority.” Bertrand Russell, Unpopular Essays (1950)*

*"I seek a method by which teachers teach less and learners learn more." Johann Comenius, writer of the first illustrated textbook (1630)*

*Guy Claxton, M.A.(Cantab.), D.Phil.(Oxon.) Professor in Education at Bristol University: 3 R's: Resourcefulness, reflection and resilience.*

What use is Jazz Education? What use is education? What use, we might ask is jazz?

If jazz is a musical process, characterized by improvisation, then education as *edu-care* is a process of drawing out, commitment to values, a belief in people and potential. Jazz education is therefore all of these things.

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So where does Jazz education fit into all this. The jazz community, or is it the jazz business, comprises of audiences, musicians, promoters, critics/philosophers and I will obviously say educators.

Jazz education is nothing new. There has always been jazz education in as much as musicians have always learnt from one another, mentoring if you like, and in some cases a devotional master/guru and initiate relationship. Some will argue, quite assertively, that jazz developed precisely because it was *not taught* within formal educational structures, Simon Wolf suggesting that “jazz is something you did if you didn’t want to go to college”! However, times have changed since Don Rendell and his chums repeatedly went to the cinema in order to learn tunes by ear, returning until the song had been learnt (pianist lifting the changes, Don lifting the tune, singer the words etc), and many years later I remember sitting down with half a dozen folk at the Barry Summer School, eagerly copying tunes from just one treasured fake book. Things have changed with the jazz education industry, Jamie Aebersold’s immense contribution, our own JazzWise and so on. The formal schooling of jazz didn’t start until 1947 (60 years ago) and the proliferation and effect of Jazz Education has been considerable. We have reached a point where pretty much every city, and many towns in the UK offer jazz workshops. There are 7 full-time jazz specialist conservatoire undergraduate courses, at least 7 degree courses offering specialist jazz tuition, 7 Jazz-specific Post Graduate courses, as well as at least 8 access courses with new ones apparently emerging every year. Even more widespread is the contribution of jazz musicians within local music services, FE and Youth Jazz Projects.

Other outcomes of Jazz Education:

- Materials. One can learn jazz in almost any city in the developed world.

- Students/jazz musicians are increasingly skilled, technically able and increasingly multi-disciplinary in their expectations and interactions.
- Jazz frequently forms significant social contact and collective continuing education in adult education.
- Pupils in schools are engaging with improvisation and being taught by expert improvisers are distinct to classically trained music teachers. This is a direct result of degree qualifications in jazz allowing jazz graduates access to PGCE courses.
- Aspirational and enthusiastic young folk have access to collective music making through the incredible network of Youth Jazz Orchestras and organisations such as the Jazz Warriors.
- The **use** of improvisation in music education in general cannot be underestimated and this is an area where jazz musicians possess the expertise. In fact, the teaching and learning of jazz frequently exemplifies methods promoted as models of best practice by music educators – experiential, student-centred, inclusive, suitable for mixed ability learning and so on.

But tonight we ask the question **What Use is this Jazz Education?** This is a good question, reminding me of Lionel Grigson, jazz musician and formerly a teacher here at the Guildhall, who explained Wittgenstein's view that **meaning is in use**. So for me the question is how do we **use** jazz education? We clearly use a lot of jazz education, but I suggest that the value, the meaning, of jazz education is not in the **what** (which I have already disclosed) but in the **how** and **why**.

## SO HOW AND WHY DO WE USE JAZZ EDUCATION? WHAT IS THE USE?

Education should serve students, the community and the wider society/the country. I will generally be speaking from the perspective of HE because that is my immediate background, although I intend to make reference to the range of jazz education within the UK.

### 1) What use is Jazz Education to students?

#### 2 simple objectives:

1. Stewarding/nurturing of emerging young artists.
2. Aspiring to prepare young artists for a lifetime of music.

#### What does this mean in terms of USE?

We are all ... (artists, educators and students) in the **Values Business**... and values determine **how** we go about these objectives, how we use ourselves as educators:

Lets look at this and examine the factors at work here...

- Teachers (like artists) are in the values business, and explicitly so – this is an important distinction. Whatever our area of work, (schools, FE, HE), our drivers are educational, musical, aesthetic and philosophical... perhaps tempered in this day by financial imperatives, but values all the same. So as educators we are using our values to underpin our roles, to design curricula and teaching strategies. This is our **usefulness**.
- Our use of ourselves as conduits or facilitators of learning will manifest itself in not only in the “**what**” of learning, but the “**how**” and “**why**”. This critical distinction underscores every teaching and learning experience whether planned or otherwise. Because of our values and our **use**, Jazz educators are interested in **how students learn**, we are interested in **how students improvise** and **express themselves**. Jazz educators are interested in what motivates artists, their responsibilities to themselves... and to society. Our values and use of self means that **we are interested in their care** assisting young musicians not only in the powers of expression but also in resourcefulness, resilience and reflection. It is worth noting that how we teach inevitably determines the extent to which these students become life-long learners.
- So, in summary, the **healthy USE** of jazz education cultivates learning and expressive processes, it cultivates students' thinking and aspires to align attitudes, beliefs, value and social behaviours consistent with higher values (ie commitment to creativity, rigorous exploration, self-learning, co-operation, innovation, resilience, reflection and resourcefulness – to name a few!). Jazz Education is not only about playing in 12 keys, but about values, learning, expression and the how and why.

Quite a responsibility...

## 2) Use/value to the wider jazz communities and society:

So far I have discussed matters that are explicitly educational concerned primarily with the student experience and the values held by jazz educators. However, the **use** and value of Jazz Education attempts to reach further to the community of improvisers, the wider jazz community and to the rest of society.

- Consider the fact that we live in a period of immense cultural, political, technological and economic change – some would say chaos. It is a time when communities need artists, yet it is also a time when artists frequently suffer mistrust and alienation, while society's connection with the art-form is confused and undermined by unbridled commercialism and consumerism. Clearly, many feel that the economics of producing art are increasingly uncompromising, that funding streams are political minefields and patronage and endowment as competitive as Olympic events. So at a time when musicians are so vulnerable, I feel that jazz educators, and in particular educational institutions such as the one we are in tonight can be of real **use**, specifically by offering some protection to the art-form and its practitioners through **advocacy** and at risk of conceit, by attempting to **elevate the level of debate**:

Lets look at this...

1. **Use: Advocacy:** Jazz Educators are by definition, seriously concerned with, and accountable for, the development of young artists. Through the culture of accountability (unwelcome though it might be), jazz educators have become reasonably expert at articulating learning processes, outcomes, cost and benefits and are able to explain not only student needs, but significantly, jazz education in relation to the context of music making through our direct contact with what Steve Swallow calls the *community of improvisors*.
2. **Use: Identifying themes in a balanced debate.** Jazz the art-form and jazz education are vulnerable in the context of rapidly changing cultural norms, post-modernism, the technological age and in particular from a culture of uncompromisingly illiberal, or too liberal, business ethics. When balanced debate appears to be uncommon, the presentation of measured views and informed opinion is at a premium. Jazz Educators and their institutions have a duty to contribute to the discussion, aiming elevate discussion through a commitment to higher thinking, and the ability to identify the full range factors at work. Tonight is a good example... a range of emphases are represented here, differences may or may not exist, yet there is a commitment to addressing problems and finding solutions in accordance with a set of values, collectively held to be worthy – rather like a group of improvisers!

In summary - the Institutions of Jazz Education are well placed to act as advocates due to their position in national and political strategies.

### Where is the Proof:

What kind of case can we make?

Consider these figures:

- Approximately 440 students are currently in full-time higher education in jazz.
- Representing approximately £1.5 million invested in teaching and learning.
- Resulting in approximately 200 student performances each year (probably more and leaving aside the informal learning experiences and performances generated by youth jazz orchestras.

What does this show?

- The £12000 spent on a jazz musician at music-college is likely to be the biggest financial investment in their music making throughout their career.
- It shows that investment produces results. At present, approximately 150 students graduate from HEIs every year. That is 1500 in 10 years!

While hard-nosed fiscal pragmatists will point out the lack of work, not every country in Europe approaches the arts in the same way. For instance there are more than 60 full-time state run opera houses in Germany, and a further 40 – 60 seasonal houses... (although these figures may be out of date). For the record, Jazz Services have commissioned research that demonstrates the value of Jazz to the regional and national economies and social infrastructure. Again it is values and we have to take a stand here, advocating the fact that society is better off with artists than without them. While the poet can say that “when you deprive a man of the power of expression he expresses himself in the expression of power”, as educators, we can also ground argument in learned articles and clinical studies proving the value of creative pursuits to mental health, longevity and indeed, productivity. Even the business world is using jazz as a model of co-operative practice. So isn't this a case for a measured debate, grounded in some higher thinking and worthy values?

## Challenges:

Although I have presented an optimistic view of jazz education unashamedly founded upon romantic educational principals and aesthetic and philosophical values, I am not naïve and we do face serious challenges.

Jazz Education isn't always effective or **useful**. The music is changing so quickly that what have become accepted as the standard models for learning jazz, whether through big bands or the typical North American technician curriculum comprising of improvisation and arranging classes, are not necessarily the best match for an art form constantly redefining itself - and we haven't even touched upon the issues of access and affordability (subjects that deserve a platform such as this). Educators worth their salt will be redeveloping their curricula, questioning their aims and objectives and indeed their values and usefulness. But education is hopeful and aspirational.

Education is a place where students can choose to be ideal, to experience or be encouraged to experience their own voice – this is not naïve, and my experience is that students are all too aware of the demands of the so-called real-world and necessity for flexible employment. I believe that through confidence gained from a degree of longevity, the willingness to reflect and review, Jazz education in the UK is now ready to mature as educators become less preoccupied with the acquisition of new materials and more interested in how students learn (that is more interested in education than jazz education), then jazz education will produce increasing numbers of highly skilled improvisers, and that these folk will play an increasingly valuable role in music making in the UK and elsewhere.

So in summary,

### **What is the Use of Jazz Education? Jazz Education is useful because:**

- Abundance of materials and the proliferation of opportunities for learning to play the music (although issues of affordability and access remain)
- Full-time jazz education not only facilitates dexterity but in a balanced curriculum founded on sound values, it results in life-long learning habits as well as the acquisition of aesthetic values that are both personal to the student and the community of improvisors.
- The range of school and FE provision introduces children and adults to the richness of jazz.
- Jazz education is at reflecting, transitioning from a position of being interested in what it teaches towards how students learn, hopefully resulting in the formation of mature young improvisers, the next generation of leaders in the music.
- The institutions of Jazz Education can act as advocates for the needs of musicians, communities and audiences, placing opinion in context and offering hope through commitment to a measured view emerging from a commitment to solving problems through rigorous investigation. Once again, tonight's debate characterises the interest in and commitment to such a measured discussion.

It is by engaging with values that we will sustain these achievements, and I leave you with a sentence from Pat Metheny's message to the IAJE in 2001:

*I guess what my message here is today, as we all launch off into our various extremely individualized little niches within the larger community of jazz and music, is that the openness to experiment, to really be in the moment, not only the specific musical moment, but the larger view of time and culture, is not really an option for jazz musicians at any level -- it is a necessity if the music is going to go on.*