



COMBO REHEARSAL GUIDELINES

BY JAMEY AEBERSOLD

Jamey Aebersold Jazz[®]



COMBO REHEARSAL Guidelines

Revised 2020

Contents:

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| 2. Typical camp schedule | 25. Combo morale |
| 3. Preparation for combo class | 28. Comping |
| 5. Object of each days class | 33. Rhythm section problems |
| 7. Tuning-up the combo | 38. Backgrounds |
| 9. Tune Selection | 40. Vocalists in combos |
| 11. What to listen for while playing the melody/head | 43. Use of microphone in combo |
| 13. What to listen for when students solo | 46. Classroom theory and application |
| 16. How to end the rehearsal | 49. Master classes |
| 17. Physical layout of the rehearsal room | 51. Record combos |
| 20. Room acoustics | 56. Floating teachers |
| 21. Level of combo | 59. Friday student concert |
| 23. Personality problems in combo | 62. General comments |
| | 67. Nomenclature |
| | 68. Scale Syllabus |

The Combo Rehearsal Guidelines were prepared for the Faculty teaching at the 5 ½ day summer jazz workshops, which Jamey Aebersold has held in various locations across the United States, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and Europe since 1970. It is an attempt to organize the teaching of improvisation with the intended purpose being an intensive course allowing musicians an opportunity to experience playing in the traditional small group setting. The emphasis is on creativity, spontaneity, imagination, and interaction. At times, there would be 70 Faculty members, up to 50 student combos, and five theory classes in a week's session. All levels of ability, musical knowledge, and all ages.

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Typical Class Schedule at the JA Jazz Camp

- Breakfast at The University Club: **7:00am – 8:15am**
- Theory Class: **8:30am – 10:00am**
- Jazz Musicianship: **10:00am – 11:00am**
- Combo Rehearsal: **11:00am – 12:30pm**
- Lunch featuring LIVE JAZZ!: **12:30pm – 2:00pm**
- Master Class: **2:00pm – 3:30pm**
- Combo Rehearsal: **3:30pm – 4:30pm**
- Dinner at The University Club: **5:30pm – 7:00pm**
- Piano Voicings Workshop: **6:15pm – 7:15pm**
- Faculty Concerts: **7:30pm – 10:00pm**
- Jam Sessions: **10:00pm – 11:30pm**

Preparation for Combo Class

1. Always start rehearsal on time! I know we don't leave a lot of time between classes, but you can use every minute to good advantage. You can go ahead and tune up the group then begin playing, even if one or two members haven't arrived.
2. Make sure you know the level of the combo you'll be working with long before you come into class. Get your mind in gear and be thinking at their level of ability. If you have problems working with a particular level, talk it over with another teacher for ideas on how to make the week a success. Be sure you know the instrumentation in advance.
3. Have music ready to go... parts for EACH member of the combo. Be sure to give the drummer(s) a copy of the lead line and changes. Pick tunes that they can play. Don't be thinking of tunes YOU would like to be playing. Think at their level of ability when picking tunes. Every now and then you should challenge them with a tune that is a little beyond their reach so they will have an idea of where they are going.
4. The first tune of the combo rehearsal is very important. It helps with morale and gives confidence throughout the rest of rehearsal. Pick it wisely. Build your rehearsal just like you would a good solo... let the rehearsal build in intensity so when they are finished they have a good feeling of having accomplished something but also knowing that there is more to be learned.

5. You may think in terms of what you would like to cover by the end of the week. Plan each day but be flexible and ready to alter your plans as the level and attention of the class dictates.
6. For beginning groups, be sure to review tunes from time to time (maybe at the beginning of the rehearsal to build confidence) and help with their motivation.
7. At the end of the rehearsal, say the last 8 minutes of class, tell the class what tune or tunes you want to work on in the next rehearsal. Pass out the tunes and maybe even quickly run through one or two so they know the tempo, phrasing, articulations, and the chord progressions. Ask if there are any scales or voicings that will give them problems. Encourage them to work during their spare time on their problem areas so you can better help them through the week.
8. We want to challenge them but not to the point of being overbearing.
9. Although a definite plan is desirable, sometimes the best laid plans go astray... We must also be improvisers when we teach so that we can adapt to unforeseen student needs that occur spontaneously. I have found this to be more exciting, at times, than sticking to the game plan!

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