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## Peer Mentoring in a University Jazz Ensemble

By

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### Abstract

*Through an exploration of peer mentoring in a university level jazz ensemble, I examined how three graduate students learned to perform and learned to teach based in a specific cultural music context—jazz. Framed within the universal-pluralistic debate, three students pursuing graduate degrees (Music Education, Mechanical Engineering, Philosophy) shared their prior experiences with learning to play jazz and being mentored during that process, and with mentoring each other and mentoring undergraduate students in a jazz ensemble during the course of this study. The following questions guided this study: (1) How did the participants learn to become peer mentors? (2) How did the participants engage in the peer mentoring process during this study? Data collection for this study included interviews and observations of the three participants during one semester of instruction. Data analysis revealed that peer mentoring was a conduit for how these graduate students learned to perform and teach jazz music. Themes for this study included learning to mentor in jazz and mentoring in the jazz ensemble. Suggestions for the profession include peer mentoring can assist music educators with learning to teach and perform a specific musical style.*

**Keywords:** peer mentoring, universal-pluralistic debate, learning jazz, teaching jazz, performing jazz

Jazz musicians learned via aural and oral ways in non-academic settings in the historic jazz culture (Goodrich, 2008). As they learned how to play jazz music, they listened to live performances, records, and fellow jazz musicians, or peers. Historically, peer mentoring comprised an integral part of learning in jazz music (Goodrich, 2007). As jazz musicians engaged in the peer mentoring process they learned new melodic and harmonic phrases, style, and songs as they shared their knowledge with each other. When jazz music entered the schools, however, the big band model became the predominant type of ensemble where the director conducted the group, often similar to directing a concert band (Goodrich, 2005; Kelly, 2013). This model, where the director acts as the sole authority of knowledge in the ensemble rehearsal, led the way for a transformation with the way jazz music was learned. Cultural elements unique to jazz music such as lingo, and approaches to learning jazz, most notably via aural ways with improvisation that included sharing of knowledge via peer mentoring, were discarded as the emphasis in learning shifted towards reading music, with both ensemble parts and solos notated note-for-note for the student (Goodrich, 2008). Thus, with the introduction and subsequent inclusion of jazz music in U.S. schools post-World War II (typically performed in the big band jazz ensemble), students had fewer opportunities to mentor each other and to learn from each other via the engagement that occurs during peer mentoring.

A primary issue with how musicians learn to play jazz today is how it is taught in schools. A central tenet of this issue lies within the realm of teacher training in jazz for undergraduate music education majors. Preservice teachers often receive a “one size fits all” approach in learning how to teach a multitude of ensembles in undergraduate music education programs. Yet, Herbst (1997) argued within the context of a study of Balinese teachers, “within any musical performance style exist various intrinsic teaching methods” (p. xviii). But, a

universalist approach in music education is perpetuated with the assumption that all teachers and learners learn in the same universal manner, regardless of musical style. Dunbar-Hall (2006) posited that this viewpoint does not take into consideration the specific culture of the music, which contributes towards a “disjuncture between learners and musical styles” (p. 63). Therefore, a universalist approach does not consider the individual student as they negotiate through prior learning styles as they embark upon new teaching methods and expectations (Dunbar-Hall, 2006). A pluralistic approach, though, entails a process where learning music is based in enculturation and is, therefore, influenced by what is considered the host culture (Dunbar-Hall, 2000). The universalist-pluralist debate focuses primarily on the teaching and learning of non-Western music in relation to Western Art music. The tensions between learning jazz in the historic culture versus jazz education in school settings creates a similar issue (Goodrich, 2005; Prouty, 2008), and thus similar characteristics, framed within the universalist-pluralistic debate.

With consideration towards time constraints and degree requirements for teacher certification, it is often difficult to focus on the intrinsic teaching methods of each musical style. In a learning environment where students share their knowledge with each other, opportunities can be created via peer mentoring for learning more about a particular music style and elevation of performance skills. A study that explores peer mentoring among students as they share their knowledge with each other may provide insights into how they can mentor and concurrently learn from each other in any type of school music ensemble. Because I explored peer mentoring in a university level jazz ensemble for this study, I examined literature that pertains to the universalist-pluralist debate, the teaching and learning of jazz, and peer mentoring.

### **Universalist-pluralist debate**

For this study I situated this exploration into peer mentoring within the universalist-pluralist debate. Dunbar-Hall (2000) explored the universalist-pluralist debate in a study of the teaching of Balinese gamelan and suggested that teachers need to consider the culture, knowledge, and the people associated with a particular style of music in order to effectively teach it. Schippers (2010) explored the way music of the world's cultures is acquired, developed, and transmitted. Campbell (2004) stressed the notion that to teach music from different cultures around the world, one must engage in interactive experiences with the music to be able to teach it. In addition, Campbell provided insights for pedagogical approaches into teaching music of the world's cultures including aural, kinesthetic, and visceral facets of the music-making process. Using a study of North American practitioners of Japanese shakuhachi music, Matsunobu (2011) argued that teachers must understand the shared aspects of music experience in order to teach and learn music outside of its original context, in this case spirituality. Hennessy (2005) studied a taiko ensemble (Japanese style of drumming) in Southwest England. Although Hennessy cautioned that teachers may not possess the experience nor interest to be able to incorporate a wide variety of different musical styles in their teaching, the taiko ensemble presented alternate opportunities for participants to develop their musicianship to a higher level, particularly with regards to using their ears, rhythm, and ensemble playing.

### **Teaching and learning in jazz**

The perceived dichotomy between jazz as it was originally learned in the historic jazz culture and how it is learned in an institutional setting has been explored (Goodrich, 2008). The concepts of "teaching" and "learning" are often intertwined under the label of "jazz education" and Kelly (2013) stated that learning jazz is "multi-faceted and multi-dimensional" (p. 196).

Kelly recommended that university faculty include jazz teaching experiences for all students taking similar courses, to provide a more thorough comprehension of the genre.

Wilf (2010) explored the challenges of learning embedded in post-secondary jazz education with the codification and standardization of its pedagogical materials in an institution, versus the historical means of learning the style: emulation of musicians and dissemination of recordings. Prouty (2008) discussed the tensions between the study of improvisation in an institutionalized environment with educators using pedagogical practices that stifle creativity, as opposed to potentially limitless possibilities inherent in improvisation for pedagogical and curricular practices between teacher and student. Goodrich (2008) argued that procedural knowledge of jazz education in school ensembles is similar to what is used in concert bands. This reflected in how similar the teaching and learning methods in the jazz ensembles were when compared to the concert bands. Historically, jazz musicians learned to play via listening to their peers and records, and through mentoring each other.

### **Peer mentoring**

Peer mentoring comprised an intrinsic component of how jazz musicians taught each other and subsequently learned to play the genre (Goodrich, 2007). Bozeman and Feeney (2007) attempted to define a theory of mentoring, but acknowledged that mentoring is a complex activity, for separating mentoring from other types of learning is problematic and explains why mentoring is often ill-defined in the literature. They posited that researchers fail to distinguish mentoring from different types of knowledge transmission and that mentoring involves informal transmission of knowledge and is successful only when the mentee considers the information relevant.

Swap, Leonard, Shields, and Abrams (2001) explored how knowledge is transferred within an organization and found that knowledge is gained through experience, and experience is accrued over time with exposure to the subject matter. Within an organization, mentors engage in socialization (sharing experiences) and internalization (learning by doing). Mentors transfer skills, convey knowledge about the organization of the local system, the norms of behavior, and the values of an organization. Within socialization, learners learn via informal means, often through observing a particular behavior, reflecting upon feedback from a mentor, and through active learning. In a study of music teacher education students who mentored elementary students in a cross-age mentoring program, Madsen (2011) discovered that the friendships developed during the mentoring process were reported as the most important component of the mentoring process. Friendships were explored with co-mentoring in a university jazz ensemble in which undergraduate participants served as both mentors and mentees concurrently (Goodrich, 2014). In this study, social connections were heightened and reinforced as participants engaged in the mentoring process since they were allowed to contribute ideas regarding the musical directives in the ensemble. In turn, they reported that this helped to elevate their knowledge of jazz in addition to the performance level of the ensemble.

In an examination of attrition in graduate programs, Boyle and Boice (1998) found that mentoring facilitated enculturation of first year students into graduate programs. They identified three best practices of successful graduate programs: Collegiality—support of community of friendly attitudes among first year students; Mentoring—programs support mentoring among students and between faculty and students; and Structure—well-organized program in which friendly and professional relationships between students and faculty were encouraged in addition to clear expectations set by the faculty of what was expected of graduate students in the program.

Napoles (2008) investigated relationships between instructor, peer, and self-evaluations after micro-teaching episodes in class. Napoles (2008) discovered that instructor evaluations were the highest, and peer evaluations were consistently the lowest among the participants in the study. Further, Napoles (2008) discovered that peers valued feedback from their fellow peers more than from their instructors.

McCormack and West (2006) investigated a group mentoring program for university women. They suggested that traditional mentoring relationships involve a mentor-mentee relationship and are thus hierarchical in their organization. A group mentoring program, in which the mentor concurrently guides several mentees, can help to reduce the hierarchical structure typically associated with mentoring relationships. This allows for more sharing of knowledge among the mentor and mentees. In addition, they asserted that any student can serve as mentor and mentee. Goodrich (2007) investigated a high school jazz band in which the director used a formal peer mentoring system to elevate the performance level of the ensemble. Although the director in this study was actively involved with establishing guidelines and meeting frequently with student mentors at the beginning of the school year, once the peer mentoring system was up-and-running the students began to mentor on their own accord with minimal involvement from the director.

### **Peer mentoring context**

The peer mentoring system in this study was not part of any university wide mentoring system. Although peer mentoring can be hierarchical in structure and under the direct supervision of a teacher, the peer mentoring in this study was informal and not under the direct supervision of the director of the jazz ensemble. Peer mentoring involved the graduate students, who recounted their experiences with peer mentoring as they learned to play jazz, how they

mentored people as they developed their performance skills to a higher level, and their reflections on current participation with the peer mentoring process. Peer mentoring in this study embodied several closely-related, yet distinct components of approaches to learning to perform this style; learning to mentor each other, and to mentor the undergraduate students.

For the purposes of this study, I define peer mentoring as any student-to-student coaching and feedback, in which students (mentors) share information to another student who is the recipient of the information (mentee). I draw upon Bozeman and Feeney's definition of mentoring in which mentoring is, "between a person who is perceived to have greater knowledge, wisdom, or experience (the mentor) and a person who is perceived to have less (the protégé)" (Bozeman & Feeney, 2007, p. 731). The transfer of knowledge is a characteristic of teaching, in which a trained person (considered the expert) dispenses information to students via one-way instruction. The teacher is responsible for additional duties, such as classroom management and tasks not directly associated with knowledge such as administrative duties. A teacher, though, does not always serve as a mentor to their students. Peer mentoring involves more than the transfer of knowledge. It is a process of engagement that involves social interactions and does not always relate to subject matter knowledge being transferred from one person to another. In addition, peer mentoring, "encourages mentors' personal growth and provides advice, support, and knowledge to the mentee" (Colvin & Ashman, 2010, p. 122).

While peer mentoring is an established instructional practice in many jazz ensembles (e.g., section leaders running sectionals), I did not identify any studies that specifically investigated peer mentoring in a university level ensemble. The purpose of this study was to explore how the participants became peer mentors, and how they engaged in the process in a university level jazz ensemble during the course of this study. The following questions guided

this study: (1) How did the participants learn to become peer mentors? (2) How did the participants engage in the peer mentoring process during this study?

### **Method**

A private university in the Northeastern United States served as the site for this study. A jazz degree program did not exist at this institution, and membership in the jazz ensembles (big band, two combos) consisted primarily of non-music majors. Although the ensemble in this study (a “big band”) was offered as a course with credit, rehearsal space was limited due to the urban setting of the university. They rehearsed in a garage on campus, two nights per week for a total of three hours. I received institutional review board approval for this study and all names and locations used in this study are pseudonyms to hide the identity of the participants.

### **Research Design**

I framed the research design for this study within qualitative inquiry, as I wanted to interpret the reality of the participants of the case being studied. The case in this study entailed the three participants and their experiences with peer mentoring. Acting in the capacity of what Creswell (2007) referred to as the key instrument, I collected and analyzed data within an intrinsic case study design. Peer mentoring, the context of this intrinsic case study, was situated within a university jazz ensemble and was bounded by one semester of instruction (Creswell, 2007). The intrinsic case study design provided a platform for me to explore the perspectives of the participants in the jazz ensemble as they discussed their experiences with peer mentoring.

### **Participants**

Nineteen students comprised the membership of this ensemble: three graduate students, and sixteen undergraduate students. Because I was interested in exploring students with advanced jazz performance skills who mentored each other and the younger students, I used

criterion sampling to select the three graduate student members as participants in this study (Creswell, 2007). Selection criteria included participants who performed jazz music at an advanced level, and were involved with mentoring the younger undergraduate members of the ensemble.

The graduate students in this study included: Charles, guitar, a masters level student in Music Education, served as the graduate teaching assistant for the jazz ensemble during the year of this study. He also received an undergraduate degree in jazz performance. While he pursued the masters degree and teaching certification, Charles maintained a teaching position at a local public school. James, trumpet, a doctoral level student in Philosophy, held a Teaching Assistantship in the Philosophy department at this university, and played trumpet in the ensemble. He received a Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology and a Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy and Political Science from a university on the west coast. Justin, piano, a doctoral level graduate candidate in Mechanical Engineering, was at this private university to focus on energy and acoustics. He received an undergraduate degree in Mechanical Engineering from a university on the east coast.

### **Data generation**

Data collection entailed interviews and observations of jazz ensemble rehearsals during one semester of instruction. Interviews comprised the primary source of data for this study, as I was interested in exploring the perspectives of the participants with regards to peer mentoring.

Interview questions reflected the purpose of the study and were designed to explore how these graduate students learned to play jazz music, how they learned to teach it, and their perspectives on how they interacted with each other via peer mentoring. I interviewed participants individually. I used semi-structured interview questions to allow for flexibility

during the interviews so I could ask follow-up questions as warranted (Patton, 2002). I recorded the interviews using a digital recording device and transcribed the interviews within a 48 hour time period.

As I sought to explore how the participants became peer mentors, observation data was not feasible as the participants recalled past experiences. Because I was interested in the perspectives of Charles, James, and Justin, observation data served as an opportunity for me to gain access as the trusted person in this setting so that participants would be more comfortable with me (Glesne, 2006).

### **Data analysis**

Data from the interviews and observations provided me with information about how Charles, James, and Justin engaged in the peer mentoring process. Upon completion of the transcription process, I coded the data that I identified with two-to-three letter codes. Examples of these codes included “LM” for “Learning to Mentor,” and “LEO” for “Learning from Each Other.” Glesne (2006) stated that coding is a “progressive process of sorting and defining and defining and sorting those scraps of collected data” (p. 135). To assist with the identification of these “scraps” of data, I began this process with a general read through of the transcripts looking for “certain phrases, events, activities, behaviors, ideas, or other phenomena” in the data (LeCompte & Schensul, 2012, p. 91). To provide meanings to words in the data record, I followed a sequential analysis process posited by LeCompte and Schensul (2012) that includes: identifying variables—small bits and pieces of data; sub-factors—groupings of variables as they emerge in the analysis process; factors—groupings of sub-factors with theory to help explain patterns and structures; and domains—groupings of factors with how I made sense of the community of practice of these participants (pp. 93-94).

Variables in the data included Charles, James, and Justin discussing how they engaged in peer mentoring. As I reviewed the data and made note of variables, I noticed sub-factors that included “learning to mentor” (LM) which corresponded with “learning from each other” (LEO). I reviewed the data again and grouped the sub-factors into factors. For example, “learning to perform jazz” (LPJ) and “learning to mentor jazz” (LMJ) were identified as components of how Charles, James, and Justin learned to mentor. Finally, I grouped the factors together into domains, and during this process I identified the following themes: Learning to play jazz, and mentoring in the jazz ensemble. This process allowed me to “clump individual items at the concrete level into more abstract statements about the general characteristics of those items as a group” (LeCompte & Schensul, 2012, pp. 91-92).

As I wrote up each theme in a separate word document, I continued to revise each section before I merged them into this manuscript. While I did this, I sought both confirming and disconfirming examples in the data record, and made notes when I considered data to relate to the research literature. For example, I was able to confirm observations of peer mentoring episodes with what Charles, James, and Justin recalled in their interviews. A disconfirming example included my observations of the undergraduate students where they appeared to understand directives from the graduate students; yet Charles, James, and Justin reported in interviews of being frustrated at the progress of the undergraduates. I used both confirming and disconfirming examples in the results section and subsequent discussion to provide a rich portrait of the peer mentoring in this university jazz ensemble.

### **Researcher bias**

Because the interpretation of the interview data can be threatened by my own perspectives and beliefs, I kept research memos to keep track of the biases I brought to this study

(Maxwell, 1996). Personal biases included my experiences with learning and teaching jazz music. For example, I began to improvise in my high school jazz band and continued to learn and hone my skills through my graduate studies. My experience with teaching jazz ensembles includes ensembles and improvisation courses at the elementary, secondary, and university levels. During my journey with learning to improvise I sought out peer mentors to help me improve my skills, and during my first contracted teaching position I began to implement peer mentoring among the students I taught. In addition to teaching, I have performed as a jazz musician in amateur and professional level ensembles. Keeping track of these biases during the course of this study helped me to reflect on how I learned to play this genre, what I learned from being mentored by my peers, how I mentored my peers, and how I implemented and maintained peer mentoring in the ensembles I taught. Further, with these memos I could ask myself questions about whether I was really “seeing” what was going on during the peer mentoring in this study and whether I was “mapping” my experiences onto the participants in this study.

### **Trustworthiness of the final report**

In addition to keeping track of the biases I brought to this study, I asked the graduate students to conduct member checks in which they reviewed an early draft of the entire manuscript and to verify the accuracy of what they said during the interviews. I incorporated their comments into the final draft of this manuscript. Further, I asked a colleague who was a noted qualitative researcher to serve as an external peer auditor to review a draft of this document.

### **Results**

Peer mentoring in this study comprised a diverse array of experiences for these participants as they learned to play and teach jazz music, both in their prior learning experiences

and during the course of this study. These findings are discussed as themes under the following two categories: Learning to mentor in jazz, and mentoring in the jazz ensemble.

### **Learning to mentor in jazz**

*So, my middle school and high school years, there were several friends. We would get together and they would show me things. Not necessarily that I had planned on learning. There seems to be an element of spontaneity or in the moment, or what the moment calls for, or what you're inspired by in the moment, when it comes to these mentoring things.  
Charles, guitar*

For the participants in this study, learning to mentor in jazz occurred while learning to perform the music. James and Charles learned a lot about performing from their peers. During his undergraduate studies, James played in a big band at a school that did not have any jazz majors. James recalled that, “I did a lot of hanging” and “everyone who wanted to play brought in information.” After the big band concerts James and his peers would “all hang afterwards and talk about what they heard and what they would want to change.” James remembered that he “was the younger, more inexperienced person who was getting information from my peers.”

James recalled one person in particular, who:

*Was a guy in the jazz chair who was a great trumpet player. He spent a lot of time after rehearsals talking with people about how they could better. He knew a lot about it, more than the people around him, and wanted us all to sound good. He figured out a way to pass his knowledge on so we could all, kind of, come-up.*

Charles, guitar, did not “learn from someone telling me in a classroom” with regards to playing jazz, and he “transcribed a lot of solos: Bill Evans, Pat Martino, Jim Hall, Les Montgomery, and it goes on, and Keith Jarett” when he was younger. Charles learned “a lot of information just by listening to the style, so there’s a lot of things I didn’t learn from someone telling me.” Charles recalled, “a lot of sharing of information when I was learning my instrument. Sometimes it was from someone older, sometimes it was someone who had more knowledge. They could have been younger or older than me, or the same age.” During high

school Charles would jam with his friends in the basement of his house and when his “brother’s friends would come over they’d play really cool stuff. And, I would say, ‘Can you show that to me?’” In these jam sessions, Charles never set any goals to learn anything in particular. For example, “there’s not a pre-determined topic, like, we’re going to play some Led Zeppelin songs. That’s not specific at all. But then we’d play a Zeppelin tune, and I’d be, like, ‘Oh, show me that *Stairway to Heaven* solo.’ I come out of that.”

Unlike Charles and James, Justin’s first experience with learning jazz came from his piano teacher, the person “who started me in jazz” when Justin was 16 years old. Justin recalled that his piano teacher was “always focusing on not pushing people too hard, but inspiring them to want to push. That fine line is very tough to, in practice, achieve.” Justin said that he “knew nothing about jazz when I started taking with him. When he asked me what jazz I was listening to in my first lesson, I said Billy Joel.” For Justin, who grew up in a large metropolitan area and had access to live jazz music, “there wasn’t that much jazz happening around me, but you could get in the car and go hear whatever you wanted to hear.” Justin reported that he “learned piano a lot by myself and I didn’t play with tons of groups” but his piano teacher would “call me up on the gigs with his professional level people and have me come sit in for a tune.” In turn, this “inspired” Justin to practice more on his own at home.

Despite the advantages reported by James, Charles, and Justin with regards to learning to mentor from listening to recordings and from their peers, Justin was aware of the frustrations of learning to play jazz music. Justin stated “in the midst of it, it can be frustrating because you don’t see progress.” Justin understood “the frustration of young players trying to enact some of these sort of pretty complicated aspects that’s required in jazz—the harmony, the rhythm, the different aspects being enacted in real time, in a musical fashion.” As a result, Justin could “see

why people would get frustrated and not want to take the next step because it is so daunting hearing the best people, like the people on records, how good they are, and then hearing yourself.” Justin added, “you just have to take it one step at a time and just try to do one thing really well every day and over the course of time you start doing many things well.”

### **Mentoring in the jazz ensemble**

*I think it's a craft, it's something you have to just work at and, you know, do the best you can every day. Mentoring is a controlled conversation.* Justin, piano

Charles, James, and Justin used their prior experiences with playing and mentoring jazz when they began to mentor in the ensemble in this study. When James first played in this jazz ensemble he considered two options, “put your hands in your ears and play jazz when you had the opportunity” or “teach people about how everyone can get better.” James chose the latter option for he would “rather play in a good band.” For James and Justin, learning how to mentor began with listening to jazz music. For example, Justin would, “listen to recordings of the songs we play, and when something wasn't working I had to think about why it wasn't working and what could we do about it. It's tough to convey sometimes, jazz is a tricky thing.” When James listened to recordings he would try to “get information that historically would have been expected” for example, “of the drummer in this chart.”

Charles, James, and Justin all realized they needed to mentor the younger students in the jazz ensemble. The mentoring in this jazz ensemble was informal, and Charles “didn't prepare a lesson plan” nor did he “prepare specific things.” For Charles, it “felt more kind of like friendly help rather than professional coaching.” Charles would listen to recordings and then transfer what he learned into his mentoring of students in the jazz ensemble. Charles cited Miles Davis' album “Kind of Blue,” and in particular the song *So What* as a source of inspiration for listening and mentoring jazz. Charles stated, “because Jimmy Cobb's swing is so tight, yet it's very

understated in the way he comps behind the different soloists, and then Coltrane starts soloing more actively, and Jimmy Cobb's response to that is more active." For Justin, "a lot of mentoring is non-verbal, at least non-spoken, especially in jazz."

James viewed his role of mentor as one who could incorporate the ideas of the students. James said that he had "to work to really create an atmosphere where we're a team, working to solve some problem." He added, "the idea is getting people to chime in about their ideas so you can hear what they have, and, most importantly, getting people who know what they're talking about to speak up." In turn, this allowed everyone "to hear how their ideas fit with their peers."

Mentoring occurred during rehearsals. James engaged in mentoring primarily with the trumpet section and provided directives "when I hear things" and looked for "an opportunity to speak to them that's as close as possible to where the mistake happened without interrupting the rehearsal." James said, "there's a small window in which that sort of feedback is going to be helpful" but "I don't want to be the guy talking while the director's trying to say something."

In addition to mentoring within his section, James occasionally mentored other sections in the jazz ensemble, such as the rhythm section. According to James:

I often have the rhythm section on my right, and so I'm regularly leaning over and talking to them about stuff. The drummer and I have been working a lot this past semester on getting him to read lead trumpet parts, so instead of reading a drum chart he's reading a trumpet part; and we're talking about what these things mean to him in terms of how he might play. The trumpet chart is the exact opposite of a drum chart. It's all the places you shouldn't play. This gives him an idea about where the holes are that he can fill in.

At times, James also worked with the trombone section. James stated that, "because they're young and eager, it's been a good section to talk to about, you know, what might be phrased different or how we [trumpets and trombones] can line up, since the brass often have parts together."

As James, Charles, and Justin mentored the younger students, they mentored each other as well. They learned from watching how each other engaged in the peer mentoring process, particularly with how they addressed musical issues within the jazz ensemble. Justin viewed Charles, who pursued a masters level degree in music education, as “a teacher” who has “very specific goals.” Although Justin viewed Charles as “the teacher,” Charles said that he “got a lot out of working with Justin.” Charles stated, “for sectionals, Justin and I would talk to the other two members of the rhythm section. And he always had some really nice insights about how to approach things or how to, you know, tackle a problem.”

James (trumpet) learned from observing Justin (piano) and Charles (guitar) mentor members of the rhythm section. James considered Justin, “a rhythm section player” to have “a really different experience from me” as well as Charles, who “has a really different perspective on what it is to play music, particularly in the big band” for they “had a different role” as rhythm section members from James. For James, “listening to them, in mentoring other people, and also talking to them about my own playing, has been really helpful.”

In addition to observing Justin and Charles in the rhythm section, James learned as well during the mentoring process. He stated, “this is a really cool teamwork experience” because “the more you talk about jazz, the more you do jazz, the more you get better at it.” With regards to mentoring, James said, “I think mentoring is actually kind of a selfish. I feel like I learn way more than the people around me, because the more I say ‘here’s what I think drummers typically do,’ the more I think ‘wow, I gotta go back and figure out, find a recording that does that.’” As a result, James finds “myself digging through my record collection a lot more in the last couple years than I have before because I need to find stuff to illustrate points, or better yet, find things that showed how I could say it differently, or other ideas to bring forward.” James realized

during this process that “because everybody learns from it different, in that you get different ways of presenting the same material, that’s more effective.” As a result, James stated that, “I do more listening now, and more thinking about music than I did in the past.”

Despite learning from each other and from working with the younger students, Charles, James, and Justin found that mentoring was not always easy. For Justin, his self-perceived lack of formal training in teaching made it “tough to put in words when something doesn’t feel right” because “I’m not a music teacher. I haven’t had the training in how to talk descriptively about grooves and things like that, or feels or articulation.” For these graduate students, frustrations went beyond their own personal issues with parlaying mentoring directives. Justin stated, “you can’t unilaterally mentor someone. There has to be desire coming from the other side, from the mentee, the younger person.” Throughout the course of this study James, Charles, and Justin were often frustrated with the level of improvement among the younger members of the jazz ensemble. Justin indicated that, “a lot of people in the band didn’t necessarily care to get much better or really learn.” He added, “James, and Charles and I got kind of frustrated sometimes because the commitment wasn’t there, or the time [groove] wasn’t there, or the energy wasn’t there.” As people who were “serious about jazz,” Justin said that, “it was good that James and Charles were around because they’re similar in that respect. If they weren’t there, it’d probably be a lot tougher for me to be in there.”

When Charles worked with the rhythm section in the jazz ensemble, “we examine the recordings, and we try to learn the same way basically that the jazz greats learned, essentially by sharing information and listening and observing.” Even with disseminating recordings, Justin thought that ‘a big problem in listening’ existed in the jazz ensemble and that “most of the kids don’t listen enough. They just don’t have the aural history. They haven’t put in the time of

listening.” Justin found it difficult to teach students who did not listen to jazz music when he tried to teach them basic concepts of style. For Justin, “It was really tough to be able to convince people they were doing things wrong.” For example, Justin experienced frustration when “teaching the drummer that playing, ‘ching, ching-a-ching, ching-a-ching,’ every beat on the ride is not a swing pattern because his drum teacher in 8<sup>th</sup> grade taught him that was a swing pattern.” Justin said it was difficult to get the undergraduate students to realize what they were doing wrong, because they did not listen enough to jazz music and that, “it’s tough, because if you haven’t listened to jazz, you don’t know what things are supposed to sound like.”

Yet, despite issues with a perceived lack of dedication and progress of the undergraduate students, Justin and James learned from the younger students in the jazz ensemble. For Justin, mentoring the younger players “put my playing into context” as he “thought back to when I was that age and how I addressed mistakes in my playing.” From James’s vantage point in the trumpet section he saw that “there’s mentoring going all the way around in a full circle. Even Justin and Charles; they’re older people, and they’re getting mentored by younger people who are tossing new ideas out and giving them new things to think about.”

### **Discussion**

The participants in this study learned to play jazz music and engage in peer mentoring in informal and formal learning environments. Peer mentoring played an important role in these prior learning situations for Charles, James, and Justin. According to Dunbar-Hall (2006), “learners respond to culturally influenced pedagogic settings in proactive and individual ways” (Dunbar-Hall, 2006, p. 63). In the Dunbar-Hall (2006) study the learners of Balinese music had a lack of exposure to the music, whereas Charles, James, and Justin had exposure to jazz music. For example, Charles hung out with friends, who were older and more experienced with jazz, or

who had more knowledge and could help him to improve his performance skills. His desire to improve began in jazz band rehearsals at his undergraduate institution, where he was mentored outside of rehearsals by an older, more experienced jazz trumpet player. Justin attended jam sessions and performances at the encouragement of his private piano teacher. Peer mentoring, a component of learning and teaching in the historic jazz culture (Goodrich, 2007), provided a platform for Charles, James, and Justin's past and current learning and teaching experiences with jazz music. Peer mentoring in this capacity served as a pedagogical setting referred to by Dunbar-Hall (2006).

Charles, James, and Justin all had prior musical experiences in which they spent considerable time listening and emulating their favorite jazz players similar to practices discussed by Wilf (2010) and Goodrich (2008). Dunbar-Hall (2006) indicated that people learn by "adapting strategies from their previous musical backgrounds" (p. 63). Although Charles, James, and Justin had learned how to perform jazz in their past, they drew upon their performance knowledge into the development of their mentoring of the undergraduate students. They used their time spent listening and performing jazz as a framework for their teaching, and during this process they learned from each other with how to teach. For example, James, a trumpet player, observed how Charles and Justin worked with the undergraduate members of the rhythm section to help him with his own mentoring of the younger students, both in the rhythm section and the trumpet section. But, with listening to and modeling recordings—two learning approaches associated with the historic jazz culture—as one of the primary teaching techniques during the peer mentoring process for these participants, they held a limited repertoire of teaching techniques. For example, Justin recounted frustrations when the undergraduate students did not take listening seriously. According to Bozeman and Feeney (2007), the mentee must

consider the information relevant for the mentoring process to occur. Yet, Charles, James, and Justin did engage in the peer mentoring process for they possessed greater knowledge of jazz (Bozeman & Feeney, 2007) and provided advice, support, and knowledge to the undergraduate students (Colvin & Ashman, 2010).

The peer mentoring in this study was informal, and Charles, James, and Justin engaged in peer mentoring with each other and the undergraduate students in the jazz ensemble because they had to. As James recalled, he learned to mentor out of necessity because he simply wanted the jazz band to perform at a more advanced level. Further, as they mentored each other, not only did these graduate students advance their own performance level with jazz and ability to teach it from observing each other, hanging out, and asking questions, they became friends during the process. This is similar to Swap, Leonard, Shields, and Abrams (2001), in which the socialization process entails learning via informal means, observation of each other's teaching, and reflecting upon their feedback with each other while hanging out. Further, in Madsen (2011) the social component became the most important part of the mentoring process. The more Charles, James, and Justin learned from each other, the closer they became in terms of friendship, which in turn fed back into both their learning and teaching in jazz.

Campbell (2004) stressed the notion that to teach music from different cultures, one must engage in interactive experiences with the music to be able to teach it. Although Charles, James, and Justin were not necessarily learning in a manner similar to how jazz musicians learned in the historic jazz culture (e.g., from a fellow jazz musician in a dance hall), their experiences with learning to play jazz provided a platform for them to learn how to teach it to the younger, less-experienced undergraduate students in the ensemble during the year of this study.

Herbst (1997) argued that embedded in a musical style is an approach to teaching it specific to that particular style. Peer mentoring, a teaching process in the historic jazz culture (Goodrich, 2008), served as an intrinsic teaching method for the graduate students in this study. Charles, James, and Justin were able to create a strong connection between how they learned to play and how they learned to teach. This helped them to avoid what Dunbar-Hall (2006) referred to as a “disjuncture between learners and musical styles” within a universalist approach (p. 63). Thus, for these participants, peer mentoring served as a conduit for a continuous process between learning to play and learning to teach. This is similar to what Dunbar-Hall (2000) discussed in that “culturally derived perceptions in music” helped to “influence approaches in teaching” (p. 127) For these participants, learning to teach jazz is based upon learning to play jazz. Charles, James, and Justin did not consider a distinction to exist between these two concepts. The time spent listening, performing, and teaching jazz were inter-related.

### **Implications for the profession**

Hennessey (2005) cautioned that teachers may not possess the experience nor interest to be able to incorporate a wide variety of different musical styles in their teaching. The findings from this particular study, however, suggested that learning to perform a particular musical style can influence a student’s approach to teaching that style of music. Although this study entailed peer mentoring in a jazz ensemble, the instructional technique of peer mentoring may provide a platform in which students could bring their individual strengths with any musical style (e.g., zydeco, rock, hip-hop) to an undergraduate music education program. Under the guidance of music education faculty, students could engage in the peer mentoring process, learn a variety of approaches to teaching, and contribute their knowledge of a particular style to a variety of courses in an undergraduate program (e.g., methods courses). With peer mentoring, opportunities

could be created throughout coursework for students to engage in interactive experiences with music (Campbell, 2004). In turn, students could potentially gain exposure to a wide variety of styles that can provide a foundation for future teaching experiences in a variety of musical styles.

In addition to undergraduate teacher training, current teachers could provide opportunities for their students to mentor each other at early stages of musical development. For example, students in beginning band, who are typically at similar performance levels, could mentor each other as they learn their new instruments together. Peer mentoring in this application could extend into students sharing different musical interests and styles with each other, such as playing the guitar or turntable, instruments used in popular music. Similar to Charles, James, and Justin, who engaged in mentoring both in and outside of formal school environments, music teachers could encourage and guide their own students to get together on their own time and mentor each other. For example, students could engage in low-level mentoring where they share knowledge with each other about correct fingerings; mid-level mentoring where a teacher-designated student leader mentors members of their own section; and high-level mentoring, where a teacher-designated student leader mentors students in other sections (Goodrich, 2007).

Under the guidance of a music teacher, who can actively promote the mentoring process, students with similar backgrounds and diversity of musical interests could share their knowledge with each other and be open to a diversity of approaches that is valued and promoted by both the students and the teacher. With peer mentoring as the foundational instructional technique for students sharing knowledge with each other, the levels of musicianship may be elevated and subsequent ability to perform at a higher level. In turn, students of all performance levels could be motivated to continue to acquire new knowledge about different styles of music. In this study

Justin was frustrated with the performance level of the jazz ensemble. But, with Charles and James—peers whom he considered to be of a similar performance level—he realized he could continue to learn and so he remained a member of the group. Thus, the instructional technique of peer mentoring may help with retention and provide a platform in which students could bring their individual strengths with any musical style (e.g., zydeco, rock, hip-hop) or instrument (e.g., guitar, laptop, turntable) to a school music program.

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