

Final Summary Report

Dr. Timothy Howe

**Presentation to the International Jazz Educators Conference:
“Using Podcasts and Sibelius Scorch to Improve Musical Skills, Musical Rehearsals,
Improvisation, and Ensemble Performance”**

Project Synopsis:

This project was a cooperative project between Arkansas Tech faculty members Dr. Timothy Howe, Dr. Deborah Barber, Holly Ruth Gale, Dr. John Gale from University of Central Arkansas, and the Arkansas Tech Jazz Ensemble. The final product of this project resulted in two presentations at the International Jazz Educators National Conference (IAJE) January 11-13, 2007 entitled: “Jazz on the Run: Podcast Your Rehearsals” and “Scales and Changes: Woodshedding with Sibelius Scorch.” Podcasting and Sibelius Scorch are examples of recent technologies or software products that have given music students and educators new methods for improving performance skills and ensemble rehearsal methods. The goal of this project was to explore the pedagogical value of using these technologies, to gain insight into how they can be successfully utilized by jazz music educators, and to present the results to educators at the IAJE conference.

Assessment of Research Process and Goals:

This project had three separate phases after the initial planning sessions in September. Phase one was the creation of several Scorch files, both for the Jazz ensemble to use for personal practice and rehearsal and as examples for the presentation at IAJE. I chose a difficult ensemble portion from a musical work the jazz ensemble was currently rehearsing, and put it in Sibelius software, saved it as a scorch file, and posted the file to

my web page so the students could access the file and play it back. Access to the file was also made available through Blackboard. This phase of the project was moderately successful. A substantial number of students tried to utilize the file, mainly the students with a laptop computer, and attempted to use it as a practice tool. Those without a personal laptop computer they could take to a practice area were unable to take advantage of this tool. Those students that were able to access the file in there practice area found it useful and helpful overall. However the requirement for the student to have a personal computer available in their practice area was the primary disadvantage of this tool and as a result the practical value of using Scorch in this setting was limited.

The second phase of this project was to introduce podcasting to the rehearsal environment. Podcasting allows individual students to download a rehearsal performance of an individual musical work and then play it back in any number of formats while playing their instrument. In addition the student can also use the podcast to work an improvisational solo while hearing the ensemble in the rhythmic and harmonic context. The podcasts were recorded as an audio and /or video recording and posted on the ATU Jazz podcast page at Podomatic.com (atujazz@podomatic.com). Students accessed the podcasts and downloaded them to their computer, mp3 device, or burn an audio CD and use them for individual practice. Dr. Deborah Barber provided technical support for recording and posting the podcasts.

Two types of podcasts were recorded and made available. The first group involved recording three jazz ensemble arrangements without the improvised solos. The purpose

for this was to allow students to practice their improvisations outside of class while hearing the music in context. The second group of podcasts recorded jazz ensemble arrangements with a solo vocal. These were used in cooperation with the voice studios of Holly Ruth Gale and Jon Clements at Tech. The hope of this part of the project was to allow Ms. Gale or Mr. Clements to use this podcast in their studios with a few selected students to improve their abilities in jazz vocal techniques.

We were able to podcast both types of podcasts successfully, and students did use the podcasts for improvisation. Unfortunately the vocal podcasts were recorded too late in the semester to be effectively used by the vocal studios. They do however show the most promise as a teaching tool, especially under the guidance of the vocal instructor. The use of podcasting as a teaching tool was limited by student initiative and access to technology. However one unexpected byproduct of this process was student evaluation and response to their performance in general. Perhaps the greatest potential of podcasting will be as a performance progress and tracking tool over the course of a semester.

The final phase of this project was to present the results at the International Association for Jazz Education National Conference in New York City on January 10-13, 2007. Dr. Timothy Howe, Dr. Deborah Barber, Holly Ruth Gale, from Arkansas Tech and Dr. John Gale from University of Central Arkansas, presented two separate presentations at the conference: "Jazz on the Run: Podcast Your Rehearsals" and "Scales and Changes: Woodshedding With Sibelius Scorch." In each presentation Dr. Barber discussed the technical and software issues, Dr. Howe presented the use of these technologies with

instrumental ensembles, Ms. Gale presented the use of these technologies for vocal jazz, and Dr. John Gale addressed copyright issues. Both sessions were well attended and enthusiastically received by the attendees. (Copy of the Conference brochure is enclosed)

Completion of Project Deadlines

Deadline Date	Task	Status
September 15, 2006	Preliminary meeting with Barber, Gale, and Howe to plan project	Complete
October 5, 2006	Set up recording dates for pod casts	Complete
October 1-15, 2006	Create Scorch files for posting	Complete
October 16-23	Unit One (improvisation) Podcasts recorded and posted	Complete
November 20-27	Unit Two (Vocal Jazz) Podcasts recorded and posted	Complete
January 7, 2007	Discuss the project, prepare presentation for IAJE conference	Complete
January 11-13	Present "Jazz on the Run: Podcast Your Rehearsals" and "Scales and Changes: Woodshedding With Sibelius Scorch." At IAJE Conference	Complete
April 1, 2007	Final written report complete	Complete

Project was completed within budget requests.

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