

## The DeRosa Ensemble Workshops

By Jeffrey Sultanof and Richard DeRosa

### Introduction

The late Clem DeRosa was one of the great pioneers in jazz education. As early as 1955, he was one of the first educators to create a curriculum for teaching children about America's musical art form - JAZZ. He was able to transform his knowledge and experience about music into simple, effective methods that resulted in solid pedagogy and fun for the student. His work became nationally recognized, and with other educational pioneers such as David Baker, Stan Kenton, Jerry Coker and Russell Garcia, created jazz education programs for use in high schools and colleges. Clinics, workshops, festivals and numerous educational institutions have benefitted from this innovative work.

DeRosa left us in December of 2011, but several educators have carried on the vision - using Clem's methodology, and sharing his love for music - most notably his own son, Richard DeRosa who further developed "**The DeRosa Method.**"

A composer/arranger/drummer whose resume reads like a "who's who" in the jazz and popular music fields, Rich DeRosa, is currently the Director of Jazz Composition and Arranging at the University of North Texas, and was recently appointed director of the world-renowned WDR big band. Rich has been a powerful advocate for the **DeRosa Method** - presenting highly effective yet simple solutions that produce immediate musical results.

But working with students is not enough.

In many cases, educators conducting jazz ensembles and coaching combos in public middle schools, high schools and universities have not had appropriate training opportunities to gain understanding of, and to address the many concepts required to create a successful contemporary jazz combo or large ensemble.

Among the subjects covered are:

- Matters of arranging, composition, repertoire
- The manifold musical styles that fall under the purview of jazz
- The roles of each section and individual instrument
- Creating a strong rhythm section
- Achieving a solid ensemble sound
- Instrumental doubling

These topics need to be considered and explored for the continued growth of the large jazz ensemble. For example, many directors are not aware that many classic compositions and arrangements are now available in excellent editions that constitute the musical foundation of the jazz ensemble - the equivalent of Bach, Beethoven and Brahms in the classical realms.

Rich DeRosa, in conjunction with American Jazz Venues, and other like-minded, experienced educators, have designed various workshops, clinics and curriculums, using the **DeRosa Method** to meet this new challenge. We would like an opportunity to work with you and your students using simple concepts to produce maximum results in creating, teaching and making jazz an important part of your musical lives. In this way, we are continuing the rich heritage begun and fostered by Clem DeRosa.

### **DeRosa Method General Workshops**

All DeRosa Method Workshops are designed individually - to fit your schedule and your needs, whether involving one school or as part of adjudication or a festival. Some of the subjects covered are:

- What repertoire should your student ensemble study?
- What music best suits your band?
- Recognizing different types of swing in jazz
- Composing and arranging to meet the needs of your ensemble
- The jazz combo – many sizes, many styles, many benefits
- Training the ear – pitch, rhythm, ensemble unity
- The importance of individual rhythm section players
- The importance of the lead player of each section
- The rhythm section - from combo to big band

Generally, our educators work one-on-one with an ensemble or small group(s) together, then with each section. Listening and playing in the style of the music, intonation, and ensemble sound are key focus points.

We then follow up one-on-one with the band director(s) to assess their reactions and to present basic and advanced pedagogy related to large jazz ensembles. The basics of jazz in general are covered, and we address topics and individual needs for further study, as well

### **Additional Workshops Available**

#### **Anyone can improvise:**

This is a workshop designed especially for directors, many of whom have little or no experience with improvisation. You will discover creative, easy ways to get started, and receive materials to continue your journey.

#### **The Long Distance Workshop:**

We all know that budget tightening is a reality for many music programs. We have designed a new program - designed to meet your individual needs - working with your band long-distance via Skype. Please contact us for further information.

#### **The Continued Support Program:**

The live workshop does not have to end with our residency. For a yearly fee, you can continue to work with us from your own city. Upon receipt of a video or sound recording, your instructor can continue to evaluate and coach your ensemble using Skype, e-mail or a phone call. Exercises for development of areas needing more practice and suggestions for repertoire are among the many topics explored that will expand the workshop experience.

There are many other programs that are currently in development. Please feel free to call us to discuss how we can work with you and your ensemble and/or combos.