

JAZZ STRINGS LAB

Fall / Spring • Professor Tixier • University of North Texas

Course Numbers	MULB1824 / MULB5174 / MUEN5611
Meeting Time	Tuesdays & Thursdays, 2:20–4:10 PM
Location	Room 232
Instructor	Scott Tixier
Office	Room 128
Office Hours	By Appointment
Email	Scott.Tixier@unt.edu

Course Description

Jazz Strings Lab is a Lab course designed for string players interested in jazz, improvisation, contemporary ensemble playing, and professional performance practice. The course functions as both a performing ensemble and a collaborative musical laboratory. Students develop skills in improvisation, stylistic interpretation, ensemble communication, rehearsal techniques, adaptive musicianship, professional performance preparation, and real-world collaborative performance practices.

Course Philosophy

Unlike a traditional classical orchestra or fully scripted ensemble model, Jazz Strings Lab integrates structured rehearsal with guided flexibility, listening-based interaction, improvisation, stylistic adaptation, and collaborative music-making. Students should expect an environment that reflects many aspects of contemporary professional music settings, including changing musical roles, evolving arrangements, collaborative artistic decision-making, and responsiveness to ensemble interaction in real time.

Learning Outcomes

- Perform effectively within a jazz and contemporary string ensemble.
- Demonstrate increased fluency in rhythm, groove, articulation, and stylistic interpretation.
- Develop confidence in improvisation and musical interaction.
- Demonstrate professional rehearsal and performance behavior.
- Adapt musically within evolving ensemble situations.
- Apply listening and communication skills in collaborative performance settings.

Professionalism Expectations

Professionalism is an essential component of this course. Students are expected to arrive prepared, communicate professionally, participate actively, contribute positively to the ensemble environment, and maintain respectful rehearsal etiquette. Constructive discussion and musical dialogue are encouraged. Disruptive or repeatedly unprofessional behavior may negatively affect the professionalism portion of the grade.

Rehearsal Structure

Class sessions may include:

- Full ensemble rehearsal
- Sectional rehearsal
- Improvisation coaching
- Rhythm and groove development
- Guided listening
- Performance preparation
- Repertoire development
- Collaborative arranging
- Solo development
- Amplification and sound concepts
- Professional performance simulation

Because ensemble work is interactive and collaborative, rehearsals may adapt in real time based on:

- instrumentation,
- ensemble progress,
- student participation,
- upcoming performances,
- and musical needs observed during rehearsal.

Students are expected to remain flexible, engaged, and prepared throughout this process.

Teaching Assistant / Teaching Fellow Structure

Jazz Strings Lab may include Teaching Assistants (TA) and/or Teaching Fellows (TF) as part of the collaborative educational structure of the ensemble.

The TA/TF role serves multiple pedagogical purposes:

- supporting ensemble logistics and rehearsal flow,
- assisting with sectionals and musical preparation,
- helping facilitate communication and organization,
- and developing leadership and teaching experience within a professional ensemble setting.

TA/TF participation also provides students with exposure to multiple pedagogical perspectives and musical approaches to the same material, reflecting the collaborative and adaptive nature of contemporary professional music environments.

In certain situations, including university-approved research, performances, artistic residencies, guest artist collaborations, conferences, or other professional activities related to the instructor's academic and artistic work, the TA/TF may help lead rehearsals under the guidance and broader pedagogical direction of the instructor.

Performances

Public performances are considered part of the course curriculum and may include concerts, collaborations, recording projects, workshops, outreach performances, and interdisciplinary events. Students are expected to arrive prepared and represent the ensemble professionally.

Grading Breakdown

30%	Musical Preparation
30%	Participation & Professionalism
20%	Performance Contribution
20%	Artistic Development

Classroom Environment

Jazz Strings Lab is intended to be a collaborative, creative, and respectful musical environment that encourages curiosity, professionalism, flexibility, accountability, listening, creativity, and artistic growth. Food and beverages other than water are not permitted in the classroom or rehearsal space.

Attendance Policy

Because this is an ensemble-based course, attendance is essential. Students are expected to attend all rehearsals and performances, communicate absences professionally, and remain accountable for missed material. Repeated absences, chronic lateness, or lack of preparation may negatively impact the final grade. In the event of a known absence, students are expected to communicate proactively and assist in securing appropriate coverage / sub when feasible, consistent with professional ensemble practice.

Technology Policy

Phones, tablets, and laptops may be used for approved musical purposes only, including charts, notation, tuners, metronomes, recordings, and course-related materials. Non-course-related device usage that disrupts rehearsal may affect the professionalism portion of the grade.

Final Statement

Jazz Strings Lab is designed to challenge students artistically while preparing them for collaborative musical environments beyond the classroom. The course emphasizes musical growth, professionalism, adaptability, creativity, listening, and real-world ensemble experience.