

ABSTRACT IN ENGLISH

The title of my work is „Specific performance issues in jazz choir works based on the dissertation programme”. The goal of this paper is to explore specific performance and stylistic issues of jazz choir music, which I hope will contribute to its wider dissemination.

In Poland this topic is very little known and practically not yet described. There are no publications dealing with jazz choir in the Polish language. The issues are presented theoretically based on literature or score analysis, and discussed on the basis of my own experience in conducting jazz choirs in Poland, Denmark and Great Britain. Illustration of the described topics and performance problems is through the recording of a dissertation programme, which consists of arrangements representing the most important styles of jazz choir music.

The paper consists of seven main chapters plus introduction, abstract in English, bibliography and discography.

Chapter one presents different definitions of jazz music and approaches to describe this style of music. The specification of jazz is compared with western classical music. The goal is to help to understand the differences between jazz and other styles and explain the most specific aspects of this kind of music.

The second chapter is dedicated to the jazz choir, its tradition, history and characteristics. There is a description of the state of research in the field of jazz choral music and a review of the literature on vocal jazz, vocal improvisation, and leading a vocal jazz ensemble. There is a sub-chapter about the history of vocal jazz ensembles, with a short description of the most significant and influential vocal jazz groups and choirs. Another subchapter is devoted to the specification of jazz choral music, concentrating on vocal projection, articulation, rhythm, groove, improvisation, conducting, performance and repertoire.

Chapter three puts light on the topic of vocal improvisation and different ways of executing it. It starts with definition of improvisation and a short overview of how improvisation is present in different eras and styles of music. There is a section on improvisation by soloists talking mostly about scat and improvising on lyrics. Another section is about choir improvisation. There is given a closer look at the “circlesong” method, mostly about Roger Treece’s approach to this method as well as personal experience in leading circlesong workshops called London Open Choir.

Chapter four deals with the most important styles of vocal jazz music, from work songs to Negro spirituals, blues, gospel, ballad, swing, Latin, modal and contemporary jazz. It shows the historical background, describes its specification and mentions the most famous representatives of each style.

Choir arrangements chosen for the dissertation concert are analysed and described in chapter five. There are ten pieces, and each of them has a sub-chapter. The scheme for analysis is: historical background, a short note about the composer/arranger, the most famous versions, specific issues in the particular arrangement like style, tempo, level of difficulty, structure, harmony, articulation, dynamic, and the concept of the performance.

The sixth chapter describes the concept of the dissertation concert, which had to evolve into a film, as a musical show with its dramaturgy. The whole concept is built upon graduation of the number of performers. The first part consists of arrangements for a small choir a cappella and for a chamber female choir with a small combo. In the second part there are arrangements for choir with rhythm section and, for the last songs with big band and soloist, forming the climax of the concert.

The last chapter concludes the dissertation and includes insights obtained after producing the dissertation program.

The purpose of this paper is to show that choral jazz music, even if it is the most recent addition to the choral literature, is as ambitious and advanced as western classical music.

Proper, stylish performance of jazz music requires appropriate skills and knowledge. The element of improvisation and composing on stage in real time makes jazz a very demanding genre, and best reflects the musicality and creativity of the musicians. Therefore, I believe that elements of jazz education should be included in the musical curriculum at every level and I hope this work will help to popularise this idea.