

From Jazz Ensemble to Steel Band: Techniques for Effective Arranging (Handout)

By Jonah Payne

Introduction

Why Learn to Arrange?

- Save money on programming costs
- Expand the steel band repertoire
- Support student arranging efforts
- Encourage more original and creative arrangements rather than transcriptions
- Have instant availability for score/parts
- Assist with score analysis for rehearsal
- Modify existing literature to fit the needs of your band

Why Jazz Arranging?

- Musical interest
- Learn from the extensive jazz arranging lineage
- Exposure to different songs, styles, and ideas
- Calypso melodies lend themselves especially well to jazz because of their syncopation and jazzy harmonies
- Theory knowledge will help with improvisation

Melody

Melodic Paraphrasing

- Rhythmic alteration: Create syncopation through anticipation and delay; add repetition of notes; don't need to overdo this; this step is usually done before the others
- Fragmentation: Shorten note values to create space in a melody
- Connecting Tones: Connect melody notes by diatonic, chromatic, or both means
- Neighbor Tones: Add non-harmonic neighbor tones around a melodic note (upper, lower, diatonic, chromatic)
- Fills: Insert fragments of newly composed music into periods of inactivity
- Articulations/Dynamics: Vary implements, roll length, and accent intensity
- Ornamentations: Ghost notes, turns, and grace notes are all possible on pans
- Time Signature Alteration: Alter the feel of the melody by changing the time signature

Melodic Orchestration

- Unison: One voice alone, 2+ voices in unison, or 2+ voices in octaves
- Harmonized: Consonant (3rds, 6ths, 4ths, 5ths), dissonant (2nds, tritones, 7ths), or a mix of intervals
- Counter Melody: 2+ melodies occurring simultaneously (polyphony), or call and response with the main melody

Harmony

Introduction

- Jazz harmonies are typically built in 3rds, sometimes 4ths or 5ths
 - 7th chords and their extensions form the basis of jazz harmony
- Main types of 7th chords (see example 1):
 - Major (M7), minor (m7), dominant (7), half-diminished (min7b5), fully diminished (dim7)
- Extensions:
 - b9, 9, #9, 11, #11, b13, 13

Example 1—Main Types of 7th Chords

Note Categories (see example 2)

- Basic tones: root and fifth
- Guide tones: 3rd and 7th
 - Exceptions: 4th in a suspended chord, diminished 5th in half-diminished 7 chords
- Color tones: 9ths, 11ths, 13ths

Example 2—Note Categories (basic=black, guide=blue, color=pink)

Note Substitutions

- Root: Major 7=9; Minor 7=9; Dominant 7=b9, 9, #9; Half-Diminished 7=9
- 3rd: Dominant 7=4
- 5th: Major 7=#11; Minor 7=11; Dominant 7=#11, b13, 13
- 7th: Major 7=6; Minor 7=6

Strumming Voices

2-Note Examples (see example 3)

- C Major 7: C is covered in bass, and we need E (3rd) and B (7th)
- C Dominant 7: C is covered in bass, and we need E (3rd) and Bb (7th)
- C Minor 7: C is covered in bass, and we need Eb (3rd) and Bb (7th)
- C Half-Diminished 7: C is covered in bass, and we need Eb (3rd), Gb (b5), and Bb (7th)
 - This usually requires 3 notes

Example 3—2-Note ii-V-I-VI in C major

3-Note Examples (see example 4)

- C Major 7: C is covered in bass, and we need E (3rd) and B (7th)
 - Options for third voice: G (5th), D (9th), F# (#11)
- C Dominant 7: C is covered in bass, and we need E (3rd) and Bb (7th)
 - Options for third voice: G (5th), Db (b9), D (9th), D# (#9), F# (#11), Ab (b13), A (13th)
- C Minor 7: C is covered in bass, and we need Eb (3rd) and Bb (7th)
 - Options for third voice: G (5th), D (9th), F (11th)
- C Half-Diminished 7: C is covered in bass, and we need Eb (3rd), Gb (b5), and Bb (7th)
 - Options for third voice: not applicable

Example 4—3-Note ii-V-I-VI in C major

4-Note Examples (see example 5)

- C Major 7: C is covered in bass, and we need E (3rd) and B (7th)
 - Options for fourth voice: G (5th), D (9th), F# (#11), **or double the root**
- C Dominant 7: C is covered in bass, and we need E (3rd) and Bb (7th)
 - Options for fourth voice: G (5th), Db (b9), D (9th), D# (#9), F# (#11), Ab (b13), A (13th), **or double the root**
- C Minor 7: C is covered in bass, and we need Eb (3rd) and Bb (7th)
 - Options for fourth voice: G (5th), D (9th), F (11th), **or double the root**
- C Half-Diminished 7: C is covered in bass, and we need Eb (3rd), Gb (b5), and Bb (7th)
 - Options for fourth voice: **D (9th) or double the root**

Example 5—4-Note ii-V-I-VI in C major

Open vs. Closed Voicing (see example 6)

- Closed voicing: Within an octave
- Open voicing: Greater than an octave
 - Drop 2, drop 3, drop 2 and 4

Example 6—4-Note ii-V-I-VI in C major in Open Voicing

Tips

- Follow principles of voice leading when possible
 - In a ii-V-I progression, guide tones move from 3rd->7th->3rd and 7th->3rd->7th
- Notes may be doubled in unison or at the octave
 - Usually more important notes like guide tones are doubled over basic tones
- Notes in the bass or melody can also appear in the strumming voices, but they do not need to be (important!)
- Voicings are a result of intervallic relationships between pitches in the voicing:

- m2 and M7 are tense and rich
- 3rds, 6ths, and 5ths are the least tense, very mellow
- M2, m7, and aug4 have tension level between the first two groups
- P4 has tension and mellowness, and it has a strong, resonant sound
- Try to avoid using m9ths in voicings
- Low Interval Limit: avoid small intervals in lower registers

Accompaniment Rhythms

- Once you create your voicings, pick a strumming rhythm
 - Some common rhythms include:



Putting It All Together

My Order of Operations

- Melody: Transcribe the basic melody
- Bass Line: Put the roots of each chord in the bass
- Harmonies: Decide on voicings, inversions, and the number of pitches
- Comping Rhythm: Put the harmonies from the previous step into a repeated rhythm
- Alter Melody: Add intrigue to your melody through melodic paraphrasing and harmonies/counter melodies
- Get Creative: Chord/note substitutions, orchestration, call and response, counterpoint, moments of rhythmic unison, giving melody to lower voices, reharmonization

Jazz Arranging Resources

- *Jazz Arranging Techniques: From Quartet to Big Band* by Gary Lindsay
- *Instrumental Jazz Arranging: A Comprehensive and Practical Guide* by Mike Tomaro and John Wilson