



Arranging for the Jazz Combo

CLINICIAN:

Kris Berg

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ARRANGING FOR THE JAZZ COMBO:
*How to adapt jazz ensemble arranging techniques
for a smaller ensemble*

Kris Berg

Director of Jazz Studies
Collin College

Belwin Jazz / Alfred Publishing
Yamaha Performing Artist

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TYPICAL CHALLENGES WITH JAZZ COMBO PERFORMANCES

- Unimaginative melody presentation
- Unimaginative group presentation
- Too reliant on young improvisers
- Too many soloists per tune
- Soloists play too long
- Rhythm section plays at a mono-dynamic volume
- Same solo order repeated with each tune

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

- Arrange melodies and chord progressions to raise interest level
- Add introductions, backgrounds and endings
- Perform tune in an unusual meter, style or tempo
- Use orchestration to add color to group sound
- Limit number of soloists per tune
- Be creative with rhythm section behind each soloist
- Raise the level of musicality within the group

While there is ample supply of music published each year for the large jazz ensemble or big band, the amount of published material for the smaller jazz combo is very limited and can be hard to find. Real books or fake books have been a primary resource of jazz material for years and are suitable for the combo.

However, most real book tunes are written in a manner that certainly does not enhance the performance of your group. The books often provide the most basic melodies and simple chord progressions. While it could be beneficial to have more arranging provided, as arrangers this “blank canvas” is actually to our benefit. Starting with a simple lead sheet allows much more room to create an arrangement that is unique to you and your group.

On the next page is an original tune, “Standard Fare”, written in the style of a typical jazz standard. It is similar to hundreds of tunes that you can find in real books of all types. We will use this tune as the basis for the concepts discussed in this clinic.

STANDARD FARE

KRIS BERG

The musical score is written in 4/4 time and consists of 32 measures. The notes are as follows:

- Measure 1: D4, E4, F4, G4
- Measure 2: G4, A4, B4, C5
- Measure 3: C5, B4, A4, G4
- Measure 4: G4, F4, E4, D4
- Measure 5: D4, E4, F4, G4
- Measure 6: G4, A4, B4, C5
- Measure 7: C5, B4, A4, G4
- Measure 8: G4, F4, E4, D4
- Measure 9: C4, D4, E4, F4
- Measure 10: G4, A4, B4, C5
- Measure 11: C5, B4, A4, G4
- Measure 12: G4, F4, E4, D4
- Measure 13: C4, D4, E4, F4
- Measure 14: G4, A4, B4, C5
- Measure 15: C5, B4, A4, G4
- Measure 16: G4, F4, E4, D4
- Measure 17: D4, E4, F4, G4
- Measure 18: G4, A4, B4, C5
- Measure 19: C5, B4, A4, G4
- Measure 20: G4, F4, E4, D4
- Measure 21: D4, E4, F4, G4
- Measure 22: G4, A4, B4, C5
- Measure 23: C5, B4, A4, G4
- Measure 24: G4, F4, E4, D4
- Measure 25: C4, D4, E4, F4
- Measure 26: G4, A4, B4, C5
- Measure 27: C5, B4, A4, G4
- Measure 28: G4, F4, E4, D4
- Measure 29: D4, E4, F4, G4
- Measure 30: G4, A4, B4, C5
- Measure 31: C5, B4, A4, G4
- Measure 32: G4, F4, E4, D4

Chords are indicated above the staff: DM7 (measures 1-4, 5-8, 17-20, 21-24, 29-32), G9 (measures 2-4, 5-8, 9-12, 13-16, 17-20, 21-24, 25-28, 29-32), C6 (measures 9-12, 25-28), CΔ (measures 13-16), EbM7 (measure 15), Ab7 (measure 16), and D13 (measures 27-28).

ENHANCING THE MELODY

There are a couple of very simple techniques we can use to enhance the melody of our tune as we strive to make it swing!

- Anticipation

Often certain downbeat melody notes can be simply moved ahead by a half a beat, placing them on the upbeat, giving the phrase a much more swinging sound. This is often effective when used at the ends of melodic segments. Please note that the pitches have not been changed at all.

EXAMPLE 1

- Syncopation

Syncopation is simply taking consecutive downbeat notes and moving them ahead by a half a beat to create more upbeats. Again, pitches have not been changed.

EXAMPLE 2

- Non-harmonic tones

Adding simple non-harmonic tones to a melody will generate more energy in a melody line by creating more movement. Passing tones, neighboring tones, escape tones and appoggiaturas are all examples of non-harmonic tones. Here the melody is slightly changed, but the original pitches that make the melody unique are still maintained.

EXAMPLE 3

ENHANCING THE HARMONY

The way I often first approach re-harmonization is to analyze the relationship between the bass note, or root of the chord, and its relationship to the melody. Often times melody notes parallel bass notes or emphasize fundamental notes from chords such as the root, third and fifth. By substituting for certain chords we can create a much more interesting relationship between bass and melody. When first looking at substituting chords don't try to change every chord in the tune. It is best to avoid chords that are unique to a tune or are at the beginning or ending of phrases.

- Simple Chord Substitutions

Most tunes are built with major, minor and dominant chords. The simplest substitute for a major and minor chord is to move the bass note a diatonic third away in either direction. Each of the "new" chords will share multiple notes with the original chord, but will have a different sound due to the root moving. With this technique, starting from a major chord will create minor chords. Conversely, starting from a minor chord will create major chords. Comparing the melody to the two possible new chords will often eliminate one, because of the conflicting relationship between the melody and the chord. When substituting chords it is also important to look at the relationship between the new chord and the chords before it and after it. Progressions should not sound forced.

EXAMPLE 4

For dominant chords, a simple solution is the "tri-tone sub". Two dominant chords with roots a tri-tone away, share the same 3rd and 7th (enharmonically). There are many times where substituting a dominant chord a tri-tone away will create a very colorful relationship between chord and melody. Again, careful review of the melody/chord relationship may rule out the use of this substitution.

EXAMPLE 5

- Secondary Dominants

A concept often used in big band writing is the addition of secondary dominants. With restraint, the basic concept is that any chord at any time can be considered a temporary “tonic”. If a chord is considered a “tonic”, then putting a dominant in front of the chord can be very creative. This technique can be easily over used, but really creates color and energy in an arrangement.

EXAMPLE 6

Musical notation for Example 6. The staff shows a melodic line in C major. The notes are: C4 (quarter), D4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), F4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter). Above the staff, the following chords are indicated: C⁶ (above C4), A7^{#9} or E^b7 (above D4), D^M7 (above E4), and G⁹ (above F4). The notes G4, A4, and B4 are tied across the measures.

- Pedal Point Bass

A favorite technique of mine is the use of bass pedal points. Many jazz standards are built utilizing IIm7-V7 progressions. Placing the IIm7 chord over the same root as the V7 chord creates a bass “pedal point” that slows down the harmonic rhythm. A pedal point also opens the arranging possibilities to creating a rhythmic or even melodic ostinato on the bottom of the arrangement.

EXAMPLE 7

Musical notation for Example 7. The piece is in 4/4 time. The top staff shows a melodic line: D4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), F4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter), D5 (quarter). The bottom two staves show piano accompaniment. The right hand plays chords: D^M7 (measures 1-2), G⁹ (measures 3-4), D^M7 (measures 5-6), and G⁹ (measures 7-8). The left hand plays a bass line with a pedal point on D4: D4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), F4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter), D5 (quarter). The notes E4, F4, G4, and A4 are tied across the measures. The bass line is marked with a '2' under the second measure, a '3' under the third measure, and a '4' under the fourth measure.

“Standard Fare” (arranged), is an example of an arrangement using simple melodic and harmonic enhancements.

The musical score consists of eight staves of music in 4/4 time. The notes are as follows:

- Staff 1: Measures 1-4. Chords: DM^9/G , G^9 , DM^9/G , G^9 .
- Staff 2: Measures 5-8. Chords: DM^9/G , G^9 , DM^9/G , G^9 .
- Staff 3: Measures 9-12. Chords: C^6 , E^b13 , DM^9 , G^9 .
- Staff 4: Measures 13-16. Chords: EM^9 , A^9 , E^bM^9 , A^b9 .
- Staff 5: Measures 17-20. Chords: DM^9/G , G^9 , DM^9/G , G^9 .
- Staff 6: Measures 21-24. Chords: DM^9/G , G^9 , DM^9/G , G^9 .
- Staff 7: Measures 25-28. Chords: C^6 , B^b9 , AM^{11} , D^{13} .
- Staff 8: Measures 29-32. Chords: DM^9 , G^9 , C^6 .

CHANGING TEMPO / METER / STYLE

A very simple way to change up a tune is to change the tempo. It is especially effective to take a ballad and push the tempo up to medium or even fast swing. The late Frank Mantooth is one of my favorite arrangers to listen to for examples of this. It can also be a fun to change the style of a tune. Try taking a common swing tune and play it in a Latin, rock or funk style. The style change will very naturally inspire some new ideas for the melody. Here is "Standard Fare" as a bossa nova.

The musical score consists of eight staves of music in treble clef. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The time signature starts as 4/4 and changes to 7/4 at measure 21. Chords are indicated above the notes. Measure numbers 1 through 29 are marked below the staff.

Chord progression by measure:

- 1: DM^9/G
- 2: G^9
- 3: DM^9/G
- 4: G^9
- 5: DM^9/G
- 6: G^9
- 7: DM^9/G
- 8: G^9
- 9: C^6
- 10: E^b13
- 11: DM^9
- 12: G^9
- 13: EM^9
- 14: A^9
- 15: E^bM^9
- 16: A^b9
- 17: DM^9/G
- 18: G^9
- 19: DM^9/G
- 20: G^9
- 21: DM^9/G
- 22: G^9
- 23: DM^9/G
- 24: G^9
- 25: C^6
- 26: B^b9
- 27: AM^9
- 28: $D13$
- 29: $DM11$
- 30: G^9
- 31: C^6

You might try changing the meter of a tune. Change a tune from 4/4 to 3/4 and see what kind of ideas you create as you work to condense the original common time melody. Here is “Standard Fare” as it might sound played as a waltz.

The musical score is written in treble clef with a 3/4 time signature. It consists of eight staves of music, each containing a condensed melody line with corresponding chords and measure numbers. The chords are as follows:

- Staff 1: DM^7 (measures 1-2), DM^9/G (measures 3-4)
- Staff 2: DM^9 (measures 5-6), DM^9/G (measures 7-8)
- Staff 3: C^6 (measures 9-10), Eb^{13} (measures 11-12)
- Staff 4: EM^9 (measures 13-14), A^9 (measures 15-16)
- Staff 5: DM^9 (measures 17-18), DM^9/G (measures 19-20)
- Staff 6: DM^9 (measures 21-22), DM^9/G (measures 23-24)
- Staff 7: C^6 (measures 25-26), Bb^9 (measures 27-28)
- Staff 8: AM^{11} (measures 29-30), D^{13} (measures 31-32)

ORCHESTRATION

Using various instrument combinations within the small ensemble to create different sounds may be the easiest way to effect change in your group's performance. For example, if a group has three horns, that is seven different combinations you can use and that is just considering the horns. Combine that with rhythm section variations and the color possibilities are endless. Care is needed to not fragment the sound of the tune. Think in terms of longer phrases when changing combinations. 8 or even 16 bars is best.

Orchestration does not require any arranging, but careful attention should be paid ensure the tune builds properly. Think lower to higher. Starting with lower horns or registers and then replacing or adding higher horns or registers, will help to build the tune. Also think less to more. A tune will build better if you start with one or two horns (or even zero horns, piano and guitar can play melody too) and then build towards the last phrase where everyone is playing.

BUILDING MUSICALITY

Spend time with your musicians listening to small group jazz. There are many things to be learned from listening that are both different and similar to big band recordings. Here are a few simple ideas.

- In general, guitar and piano should not comp at the same time.
- Add variety with the rhythm section. Have drums, bass or piano drop out at the beginning of a new solo. Then come in later.
- Rhythm section should build in volume with each soloist, then drop in volume and build again with subsequent solos. This also encourages young soloists to build their solos.
- Have your drummer add color to the performance by alternating ride cymbals with each soloist.
- Don't have everyone solo on every tune.
- Change solo order between tunes. Try having piano or guitar go first, even before the melody.

FINAL EXAMPLE OF "STANDARD FARE"

The final example we will play is fully arranged. Here are some things to listen.

- Pedal point idea developed from first eight bars of the tune is then used as both intro and ending.
- Variety and energy is added to the intro and ending by the gradual addition or subtraction of instruments.
- Orchestration color is added to the melody through different combinations of instruments. Note the baritone sax doubling the bass line.
- Chord progression has been developed with simple substitutions and secondary dominants.
- Note that while the tune is quite arranged, the solo section reverts back to simple swing and near original chord changes.
- Only three soloists: one horn, guitar and drums.
- Color is added by having guitar comp for the first solo and piano comp for the second solo.
- Rhythm section adds to musicality by dropping volume behind second solo and building back up again to add energy.
- Simple backgrounds behind solos help to build solo sections.
- Introduction / ending idea is used as an ostinato for the drum solo.

SUGGESTED LISTENING

Here are some of my favorite small group artists / leaders that demonstrate the use of more writing and arranging:

Horace Silver
Wayne Shorter

Bobby Watson
Conrad Herwig

Art Blakey
Clifford Brown

I often find jazz vocalist's recordings to be a great resource for creative ways to perform standards. You will discover many ideas for changing styles and tempos. Here are some of my favorites:

Dianne Reeves
Kurt Elling
Nnenna Freelon

Tierney Sutton
Dominique Eade
Kevin Mahogany

Karrin Allyson
Carol Welsman
Cassandra Wilson

Of course, big band writers get very creative with style and tempo changes too. You can also find intro and ending ideas as well as possibilities for backgrounds. Again, some of my favorites:

Frank Mantooth
Bob Belden
Kim Richmond

John Fedchock
Maria Schneider
Jim McNeely

Bob Mintzer
Michael Abene
Michael Phillip Mossman

KRIS BERG

Kris Berg, Director of Jazz Studies at Collin College, north of Dallas, received his Masters and Bachelors of Music in Jazz Studies from the University of North Texas where he directed jazz ensembles and taught big band arranging. Under his direction, Collin jazz ensembles have been invited to attend the Montreux Jazz Festival in Switzerland multiple times. The band has also appeared in Nassau, Bahamas, as well as at numerous jazz festivals all over the United States. Mr. Berg is also the founder of the Collin Jazz Fest and the annual summer big band camp – The Texas All-Star Jazz Camp.

Mr. Berg's jazz compositions and arrangements have been performed and recorded by public schools, colleges and professional jazz ensembles all over the world. Kris has written charts for Chris Vadala, Kurt Elling, Delfeayo Marsalis and many others. He is a best selling big band arranger and composer for Belwin Jazz, a division of Alfred Publishing. His popular bass method book, BASS LINES IN MINUTES, has been an educational staple for years and is available from Hal Leonard.

Currently active as a bass artist / clinician for Yamaha Corporation of America, Kris has appeared with the likes of Kurt Elling, Randy Brecker, Peter Erskine, Bob Mintzer, John Fedchock, Dick Oatts, Bobby Shew, Tom "Bones" Malone, Jimmy Heath, Doc Severinsen, Clark Terry, Gregg Bissonette, Chris Vadala, Kevin Mahogany, Dennis DiBlasio, Frank Mantooth, Matt Harris, Clay Jenkins, Kim Richmond and many others. He has been selected as guest director for the IAJE Community College All-Star, the Montana All-State, the Oklahoma All-State, the Wyoming All-State, the Maine All-State and the Texas Collegiate All-State jazz bands. He has appeared at jazz festivals, conventions and camps throughout the United States and is endorsed by Walter Woods Amplifiers.

For further information regarding clinic appearances, performances, commissioned charts or jazz at Collin, please call or email.

KRIS BERG

972-881-5108

KBERG @ COLLIN.EDU

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“Narnian Dance”	Latin Original
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“The Chicken”	Funk Arrangement
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AVAILABLE NOW IN 2010

“Willow Weep for Me” – A wonderful ballad feature for your alto sax soloist, everyone from Cannonball to Diana Krall has recorded this Ann Ronell classic. Kris’ version is in a heavy 12/8 groove and allows the soloist to improvise for as little as 16 bars or more than an entire chorus. After a short cadenza, the chart builds and builds to a powerful ending. This is the perfect ballad for concert or contest.

“Rule The Roost” – The “chicken” lives on in this Tower of Power inspired original. Featuring a driving 1/16th note groove, with solo space for tenor, trombone (or guitar) and drums. In the middle is a quite funky horns only break down that will have everyone clapping. Very cool! Very funky!