

Arranging in a Nutshell

Writing portable arrangements
for 2 or 3 horns and rhythm section

Jim Repa

JEN Conference, New Orleans
January 7, 2011

Web: <http://www.jimrepa.com> Email: jimrepa@hotmail.com

1

Portable arrangements

- By “portable” we mean an arrangement that can be used for different combinations of instruments
- The opposite is to craft an arrangement based on unique characteristics of each instrument, or even each player (as Duke Ellington used to do)
- The approaches overlap, but “portable” arrangements present some limitations

2

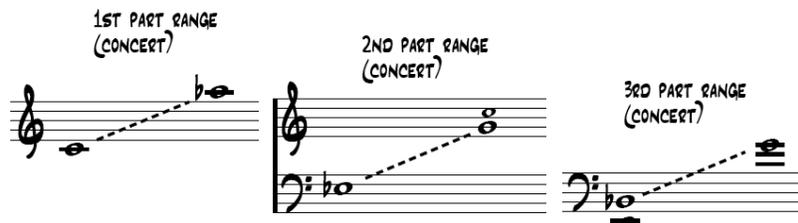
Instrumentation

- The three horns could be
 - 1st: Trumpet, alto sax, soprano sax, clarinet, or flute
 - 2nd: Alto sax, tenor sax, trombone
 - 3rd: Tenor sax, baritone sax, trombone
- A guitarist who reads well could take one of the parts. (A guitar blends better in the horn section if he plays an inner part)
- The flute sound is thinner than other horns – so it's a good idea to have the flute double the 1st part in unison or up an octave

3

Instrument Ranges

- Suggested ranges in “portable” arrangements



- 2nd voice: go as high as C if you will not have a trombone on this part (OK if trombonist has good chops)
- 3rd voice: go as low as E if you will have a trombone or bari sax on this part

4

What parts are needed?

- To handle all combinations of these parts, you'll need
 - Rhythm section parts - could be a lead sheet or individual parts for more complex tunes
 - Horn 1: Flute in C, Alto Sax in Eb (transpose up a major 6th), Trumpet/Clarinet/Soprano in Bb (up a 2nd)
 - Horn 2: Alto Sax in Eb, Tenor sax in Bb (transpose up a 9th), Trombone (bass clef), Guitar in treble clef (write one octave higher than it sounds)
 - Horn 3: Tenor sax in Bb (transpose up a 9th), Trombone (bass clef), Baritone sax in Eb (transpose up a 6th plus an octave)
- If you use software, generate parts as needed
- Label each part clearly with instrument name(s) and 1-2-or-3

5

Beware of instruments with different octave transpositions

- Do not exchange a tenor sax part for a trumpet/clarinet/soprano part (unless the player knows how to make an octave adjustment)
- Also avoid exchanging alto sax and bari sax
- Why not?
 - In a dominant 7th chord, a 13th played in a higher register than the 7th sounds good; the reverse sounds awful
 - Arbitrary octave displacement subverts your intentions and can make an arrangement weaker

6

Octave displacement example

- For 7ths and 13ths in a dominant 7th chord, octave displacement can sound really bad



7

Tricks for bari sax & trombone

- Ideally, write a separate part for bari sax and trombone
- However, in a pinch a trombonist can read a baritone sax part by pretending it is in bass clef and adding 3 flats (“Do the right thing” with other accidentals)
- Similarly, a baritone sax player can read a trombone part - pretend it is treble clef and add 3 sharps, etc.
- Don’t tell your students “This is hard”, and they might just do it!

8

Preparing for an arrangement

- Find a lead sheet for the tune or transcribe melody and chords from a recording
- Try to listen to one or more versions of the tune. Some fake books have mistakes or may not convey the feeling of the piece. (Books from the Sher company are consistently good.)
- For jazz tunes, try listening to a version recorded by the composer himself/herself
 - Original Real Book authors must have heard Miles' one-time improvisation on "In Your Own Sweet Way", but apparently never heard Brubeck's actual melody

9

Make it simple or complex

- Decide how much time you want to spend writing the arrangement
- For a simple arrangement, horns can play mostly in unison or octaves. Harmonize a few notes at selected places the melody
 - Example: Wayne Shorter's "Tom Thumb" harmonizes just two notes in the melody
- If you have more time, add more harmony, counterpoint, written intro/coda/interlude, background lines, shout chorus, etc.

10

Planning the form

- A common form includes
 - Intro
 - Head
 - Optional interlude between head and solos
 - Solos, sometimes with background lines
 - Optional arranger's chorus (soli or "shout" chorus)
 - Back to the head
 - Coda or ending
- Or use your own variations!

11

Options for solo changes

- Two options for handling changes for the horns
 - 1. Write changes over the head (or harmony parts), and use this part of the chart for both the head and solos
 - 2. Write a separate section with just changes for solos
- First option is fine for many tunes
- Use 2nd option for complex tunes or tunes where the solo changes differ from the changes on the head

12

Rehearsal marks

- ALWAYS use rehearsal marks in your charts. Save time during rehearsals, and allow for communication on the band stand.
- Rehearsal marks at beginnings of sections can help players to understand the form
- Letters, numbers, [A] - [A17], etc. are all OK - Pick a style, and use it.
- Automatically generated bar numbers are fine to supplement, not replace, rehearsal marks

13

Writing for 2 horns - options

- Vary the texture, for example:
 - Either instrument can play alone for a section
 - Horns can play in unison or octaves
 - Countermelody or call-and-response
 - One horn plays melody, the other a guide tone line
 - Two instruments are harmonized together

14

Harmonizing 2 horns

- Some options:
 - Diatonic 3rds, 6ths or 10ths (melodious “inside” sound)
 - 4ths and 5ths (good for modal tunes, fusion tunes, or more “modern” sound on standards)
 - 2nds (good for Fusion, suspensions that resolve to a 3rd, special effects; Makes the melody hard to hear)
 - Look for opportunities for contrary motion

15

2 horns - 3rds, 6ths, 10ths

The image displays three rows of musical notation for two horns, each showing a diatonic and a chromatic approach to a specific interval. The notation is in treble clef and 4/4 time.

- Row 1: 3rds**
 - Left: 3RDS (DIATONIC) FMAJ7. The notes are F4, A4, C5, G4, B4, D5.
 - Right: 3RDS (CHROMATIC APPROACH) FMAJ7. The notes are F4, A4, C5, G4, B4, D5, with a chromatic approach on the second horn part (G4 to F#4).
- Row 2: 6ths**
 - Left: 6THS FMAJ7. The notes are F4, A4, C5, G4, B4, D5.
 - Right: 6THS (CHROMATIC APPROACH) FMAJ7. The notes are F4, A4, C5, G4, B4, D5, with a chromatic approach on the second horn part (G4 to F#4).
- Row 3: 10ths**
 - Left: 10THS GbΔ7. The notes are F4, A4, C5, G4, B4, D5.
 - Right: 10THS (CHROMATIC APPROACH) GbΔ7. The notes are F4, A4, C5, G4, B4, D5, with a chromatic approach on the second horn part (G4 to F#4).

16

2 horns - 4ths, contrary motion



17

2-horn writing - suggestions

- To allow the lead player to put his personality into a line, do not make it unison
- For up-tempo swinging sections, get a good ensemble sound with unison, octaves, and close harmony
- Wider harmony (10ths, 12ths) is fine, but may be less effective for “tight” ensemble playing in fast sections, particularly with less skilled players
- You may have to choose between rich voicings and smooth voice-leading. Favor smooth voice leading for “notey” lines; favor rich voicings for slower passages
- Find your own variations: Innovation comes from varying away from guidelines in a “musical” way

18

Writing for 3 horns

- We have many options. Here are some:
 - 3 horns play harmony together
 - 1 horn plays melody and 2 horns play background line
 - 2 horns play melody together and 3rd horn plays countermelody
 - 3 horns play in unison
 - 1 or 2 horns play alone, the other(s) tacet
 - Horns play 2 or 3-part counterpoint
 - Horns switch positions - for example, put the middle horn on top of the section
 - Think of your own combinations!

19

3-part harmony

- For richness of sound, pay attention to the intervals between the horns, not just what note each instrument is playing relative to the root of the chord
- Include some voicings that contain a “primary dissonance” (PD) which is minor 2nd, major 7th, or flat 9th between two of the horns. This gives the horns a nice shimmer or buzz.
- Use flat 9ths only in dominant 7th flat 9 chords, or (in rare instances) in a major 7th chord with root on top and maj 7th below. Avoid flat 9th intervals in other cases, unless you are going for a special effect or atonal sound
- Upper-structure triads sound good with horns
- Voicings that contain maj 2nd, min 7th or maj 9th interval between two horns have some richness (less than PD)
- Voicings in 4ths sound good

20

3-horn voicing examples

SOME POSSIBLE VOICINGS

D-7 CHORD SCALE 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 MANY MORE...

SOME POSSIBLE VOICINGS

Cmaj7 CHORD SCALE 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 MANY MORE...

21

More 3-horn voicings

G7(d9) CHORD SCALE SOME POSSIBLE VOICINGS 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 MANY MORE...

G7ALT CHORD SCALE SOME POSSIBLE VOICINGS 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 MANY MORE...

22

3-horn voicings - triads



23

Hybrid chords

- Hybrid chords are triads over a dissonant bass note
- They are effective with 3 horns & bass. Use sparingly
- Example below is from 5 bars after [D17] in our chart

REHARMONIZES

| A-7b5 / D7 / | G- / / / |

A^b/D B/F B^b/G^b A^b/A G-/B^b

Musical notation showing a sequence of hybrid chords in a key with one flat. The chords are A^b/D, B/F, B^b/G^b, A^b/A, and G-/B^b. The notation includes a treble clef staff with chords and a bass clef staff with a melodic line.

24

Alternating unison and rich voicings

The image shows two staves of musical notation. The first staff contains four measures of music. The first measure is a unison line. The second measure is a rich voicing with a chord symbol A^{7b9} above it. The third measure is a unison line with a chord symbol D^{-6} above it. The fourth measure is a rich voicing with a chord symbol B^b-7 above it. The second staff contains four measures of music. The first measure is a unison line with a chord symbol D^{-6} above it. The second measure is a rich voicing with a chord symbol $E-7b5$ above it. The third measure is a rich voicing with a chord symbol A^{7b9} above it. The fourth measure is a unison line with a chord symbol D^{-6} above it.

- The example above alternates between unison and rich harmony. Note the use of P.D. in most voicings.
- See also letter [D] in today's example arrangement

25

More 3-horn voicing hints

- As with 2-horn writing, to allow a player to put his personality into a line, avoid making it unison
- For bebop or fast lines, use close harmony (interval between outer horns no wider than a 7th or 9th) or unison.
- Wide voicings sound good, but you'll hear individual voices, less of a "super-sax" tight ensemble sound. Think about the effect you want
- Try using contrary or oblique motion
- Constant structure voicings work well for modal or fusion tunes. Horace Silver's "Nutville" is a good example.

26

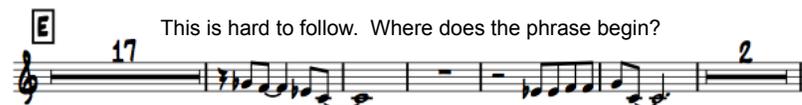
What to write for bass, piano, guitar, or drums?

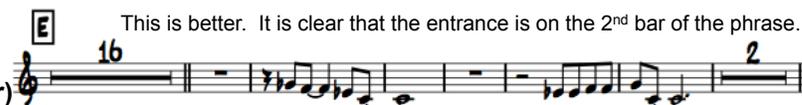
- Often, it is helpful to give a lead sheet to the rhythm section players, so they can see the melody and chords
- In a lead sheet, some sections may have a written-out bass line. Include it on a separate staff below the melody.
- For rhythmic “kicks”, players could watch the bass line, or you can write rhythms under chord changes with slashes as note-heads
- For complex or long tunes, try writing a separate part for rhythm section instruments, to avoid a lead sheet of 4 or more pages

27

For readability – indicate sections and phrases

- Consider starting each phrase on a new staff, and use a logical number of bars per line (e.g., 4 bars) if it doesn't add too many pages to the chart.
- Indicate sections and phrases with double bars, rehearsal marks or both.

Ex. 1 (bad)  This is hard to follow. Where does the phrase begin?

Ex. 2 (better)  This is better. It is clear that the entrance is on the 2nd bar of the phrase.

28

Notate rhythms for readability

- Honor the imaginary bar line between beats 2 and 3.



- But don't overdo it. For example, it's OK for a half note to cross the imaginary bar line.



29

Today's 3-horn chart

- For our live demo at the JEN conference, we have an arrangement of "There Is No Greater Love"
- On my website www.jimrepa.com I will post an arrangement of an original tune "Riffin' at the Roosevelt" based on the changes for "There Is No Greater Love"
 - The form is similar to today's arrangement, but "Riffin' at the Roosevelt" is my own tune, so I can give it away
 - Feel free to download and print the parts for your school's ensemble
 - If you use the chart at your school, please send me Email. I'd like to hear from you!

30

The form of today's chart

- Introduction – horns & rhythm section
- Letter [A] – Head (aaba)
 - First a. 2nd horn melody; add 3rd horn countermelody
 - Second a. 3 horns harmonized
 - Bridge. 3rd horn melody with 2nd horn countermelody
 - Last a. 3 horns harmonized
- Letter [B] – Interlude similar to intro
- Letter [C] – (aaba) solos with background lines
- Letter [D] – (aaba) horn soli
- Letters [E] & [F] – melody from the bridge (ba)
- Letter [G] – Coda based on intro/interlude

31

Techniques to note in our chart

- Simple intro/interlude gives the chart it's own character and ties the sections together
- Varied textures in horn writing – sometimes one horn, or 2 horns counterpoint, or 3-part harmony
- At [C17] simple background lines behind solos – can be played by 2 horns or all 3 horns
- In horn soli (letter [D]) lots of rich voicings with primary dissonances (minor 2nd, major 7th, or flat 9th), alternating with unison or octaves
- “Hybrid chords” at 5 after [D17] in soli section (horns and bass) builds tension
- At letter [G] intro/interlude again, extra bars leading to Bb7#9 final chord – last little “surprise” for the listener

32

Suggested listening

You probably already have lots of good examples of 2 and 3 horn writing in your record collection. Here are just a few suggestions.

2-horns:

Horace Silver Quintet recordings
Art Blakey quintet recordings
Maiden Voyage - Herbie Hancock
Prime Directive, other recordings by the Dave Holland quintet
Red Clay - Freddie Hubbard

3-horns:

Jazztet recordings (Benny Golson)
Kind of Blue, other Miles Davis records w/ Cannonball & Coltrane
Blue Trane - John Coltrane
Schizophrenia - Wayne Shorter

33

Further reading

- Jazz Composition - Theory and Practice
– Ted Pease (Berklee Press)
- Arranging and Composing for the Small Ensemble (Jazz, R&B, Jazz-Rock)
– David Baker (Alfred Publishing)
- Jazz Arranging and Composing - A Linear Approach
– Bill Dobbins (Advance Music)

34

Have fun!

- Lots of techniques and options sound good, especially if you've got good musicians playing your chart - there is no such thing as "The perfect arrangement"!
- Choose tunes, and level of difficulty, that suits your students, without having to find a published chart

35