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From the ideas to music sheets: guide to big band arranging

УДК 78.01+78.021.4+785.161

DOI <https://doi.org/10.24195/artstudies.2025-2.22>

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The author considers this work as a prolegomena to a manual ("guide") on arranging a musical work or a certain thematic material for a big jazz ensemble – a big band. The work has a solid methodological foundation. The art of jazz is interpreted in the spirit of philosophical phenomenology (E. Husserl's teachings). In his understanding of arrangement, author relies on semiotics as a universal theory of signs, in particular on the achievements of Finnish semiotics scientific school (E. Tarasti, A. Broms etc.). In his practical recommendations on arrangement, the author relies on the perceived experience of leading jazz musicians (Kaj Backlund, Raimo Henriksson, Markku Johansson, Pentti Lasanen). The author also relies on common sense and his own many years of experience in the areas of musical performance (playing the saxophone) and compositional activity in the field of jazz music. The compositional and arrangement technique of the author is manifested in the "Missa Jazz" he created and other works. Arranging is defined as the act of transforming existing musical ideas (compositions, melodies) using certain techniques into a new composition, often intended for new instruments. Arranging jazz music is a creative activity, seeing the old in a new light, seeing possibilities, and focusing on what is not yet there. The main attention in the manual is paid to tonal music. The author relies on horizontal organization (rhythm, phrasing, logic) and vertical order (functional harmony, timbre, color), that is, on the unity of the syntagmatic and paradigmatic organization of musical form, which has its roots in natural (verbal) language. The meaning of the relationship between the tonal and modal musical "worldviews" is revealed, that is, between the pole of "verbal" musical thinking and the pole of a more archaic "pictorial", spatial experience of the world in sound form, the antagonism between which is of great importance for jazz and music at all. The secret of creative work lies in the harmonious movement between these opposite poles.

Keywords: jazz art, big band, arrangement, language, instrumentation, musical text, composition, phenomenology, semiotics.

*Motto: "Freedom is being able to choose.
For me, In order to choose,
I have to have options and I have to know them."*

Statement and level of the problem study. In the fall of 2018, I finished the guidebook named *From The Ideas To Music Sheets – Guide To Big Band Arranging*, which was published in the publication series of Savonia University of Applied Sciences. It is the first Finnish jazz and light music arrangement guide of all time, and at the same time it does honour to the older, I would say to the classical styles of jazz as well as domestic (Finnish) arrangers and composers, whose teachings and music should not be completely forgotten. The book is dedicated to The Finnish Radio Broadcasting Dance Orchestra (1957–75), whose music I enjoyed as a teenager – and I still enjoy it.

Why am I writing an introduction about my guide for this magazine, a publication of the Finnish Semiotics Society? The reason is that the guide applies semiotics and phenomenology to the practical making of music – for the first time? No other such presentations have come across. In my writing, I focus on the so-called common sense questions without going deep into the details of the substance of big band music. Maybe someone else could get excited about this small attempt and develop these ideas within his own special field. I am relying here on just a few basic principles, with which I offered the reader as versatile a perspective as possible on

arranging, including "quiet knowledge of the author". I had discovered all this gradually through my own experience, also from literature or learned from a few top men, among whom I would especially mention the names Kaj Backlund, Raimo Henriksson, Markku Johansson and Pentti Lasanen. The perspective on arranging is unashamedly subjective: I describe it from as personal a perspective as possible. What is our own? Well, nothing much, but adopting, melting and reproducing already existing things, perhaps with your own personal tone of voice, can result in the most durable "own", that's what I believe. And this sentence is often repeated in the guide: "Don't believe what I have said, but test everything in practice".

Long live pluralism! The world is so complex that it is difficult to explain it with only one theory or thought model. That's why I combined here in an eclectic way, as in my dissertation at the time, the things I found to be important, as the principle "this is how I experienced it". My effort was to strengthen awareness of the ideal process of arranging, as well as awareness of one's own mental resources and how to use them appropriately.

Let's summarize briefly: Music arrangement is the transformation of existing musical ideas (compositions, melodies) in a personal way for a new purpose, often also for a new instrumentation (Boyd; Leopold; Riethmüller). The new purpose usually precedes the "order", which is the basic driving force of the arranger: order ==> anxiety ==> action. Arranging jazz music is

a creative activity, seeing the old in a new light, seeing possibilities, orienting towards what is not yet there. So, all in all, it's almost composing. To orchestrate music for new instruments – practiced in classical music – is a different matter; it's just that music is mechanically transferred to other instruments. Now the task was to figure out "how to arrange that or this familiar or new melody to a well-sounding big band/swing style – for tomorrow". The melody can be, for example, the Pori march (from the eighteenth century).

The purpose of the work is to reveal the general scientific and music-theoretical foundations, to explain the main principles of arranging jazz music for big band.

Research methodology. The work has a solid methodological foundation. The art of jazz is interpreted in the spirit of philosophical phenomenology (E. Husserl's teachings). In his understanding of arrangement, author relies on semiotics as a universal theory of signs, in particular on the achievements of Finnish semiotics scientific school (E. Tarasti, A. Broms etc.). Methods of generalization, comparison, classification, and structural analysis are also used.

Results & Discussion. The main focus of the guide's harmonic material is on tonal (not modal or atonal) phenomena. I wanted to offer the reader a clear introduction to tonality and its conventions, forms and logic, continuity, where chained chords refer to each other. Harmony horizontally (i.e. melody) is semi-based on succession, movement, time, rhythm, "word", even logic, while harmony vertically (i.e. harmony) is based on simultaneity, immobility, timelessness, timbre and its "colours", as if "to the picture". Our brains contain these two "worldviews" revealed by linguistics, between which an irreconcilable antagonism prevails, Henri Broms (1992) has written. First they were discovered in natural language.

But I think that music is born from exactly this same basis, when these opposites, the syntagms and paradigms of music, i.e. "rhythm poetry" and on the other hand individual notes note by note, are brought into a fruitful interaction with each other. The resulting melody would then be the "first content" of music, i.e. its physical manifestation: the perfect union of time and timelessness, logical and poetic in music – one of humanity's finest inventions, which has its roots in natural language. But most importantly, when these "worldviews" clash in music, they simultaneously enrich it with their existence, in which case we have the opportunity for these different forms of "being": Continuous tonal "coming", i.e. the indexical chaining of chords (notes playing at the same time) into a network of reference relationships, i.e. functional harmony with chordal resolving tendencies. And the release goal is a tonic note – a psychologically satisfying thing. We also have a tonal "being", i.e.

the independent colour saturation of the chords without strong resolving tendencies. As far as musical communication is concerned, tonal rhythmic music is in a class of its own in its dialogic communicativeness. It's easy to follow, its rhythm is often catchy and the harmony/shapes are part of the rhythm. The reign of tonality in European music begins at the beginning of the 17th century – in popular music, this triumphant streak continues to this day.

Modality, atonality, etc. get little attention in this guide. Music psychologists have stated that we have a built-in tendency to perceive all sound phenomena tonally, i.e. in relation to each other, and try to return what we hear to the tonal system. According to composer Alfred Schnittke, the psychological charm of tonality lies precisely in its sophistication, in the great ability of tonal harmony to deeply describe a person's psychological emotional states (Schnittke, 2002). Modality, on the other hand, appeals especially to our archaic level of consciousness: When we move to examine and use modality instead of dynamic tonality, we find ourselves in a different kind of narrative, a more pictorial reality.

Towards the end of the arranging guide, we peek into modernization just a little, by adding formal complexity to the structures. Let there be more artistry here or not. Let's gradually abandon most "romantic feelings", sentimental modernism and its psychological-intriguing, speech-like "Tell a story" narrative on the way to something new, a different kind of narrative, pictorial-conceptual-constructive. And as paradoxical as it sounds, in jazz music this new phase is found precisely in the modality of music, which is, on the other hand, the oldest quality in making music.

Modality is not only a phenomenon specific to jazz, but it covers a very large number of world music. Modality in music represents the effort to return to the dawn of humanity, the spaces of timelessness. Musicians have been taking advantage of this human striving for "another kind of peace" for a long time. It therefore represents "being", non-resolving imagery, just as the tonal resolving chords represent "coming". Often modality avoids all phenomena related to tonal resolving. Concretely this manifests as a complete avoidance of the tritone, that "satanic" interval. According to Alfred Schnittke: in the psychological sense, the narrative power of modality is different compared to tonality. We profitably choose tonality if we are "verbal" types. But if we choose a musical "picture", even then there is no need to worry about the realization of the narrative: The picture always tells itself perfectly. Now here we have two different "worldviews" on display, the antagonism between which is one of the great things in music and jazz as well. In a semiotic sense, it is the most remarkable contrast. We move in harmony between these opposite poles – both are better. This was a small theoretical introduction to music.

Anyone who has made arrangements, when writing the first ones, remembers the moments of horror and pain when the work got stuck. The “conservatory-positivist” instruction is: “Do this and that, and your music will be completed well and by the deadline”. The skill of the arranger is the ability to vary the given material directly in the spirit of phenomenology with as many ways as possible in his mind (and soon on paper) and after that comes the choice. And when we choose one solution, then we reject others. This point requires special training.

After all, systematicity is almost a science. When approaching arrangement with the help of semiotics, we operate like a “hard science” with the material facts of music. The spiritual point of view, on the other hand, brings with it a small dose of phenomenology, where I think science and art are the closest to each other: We deal with ideal objects when we create something new. Arranging is close to composing. It is high-flying mental activity with complex psychological processes combined with sweaty artisanal grind. I know from experience that a conscious and systematic “orientation towards what is not yet”, seeing the whole in advance by visualizing its elements part by part – or layer by layer “from the bottom up” as in a watercolour painting – and then building piece by piece according to this calculation guarantees the success of the arrangement well and within the deadline. In the developing “flow”, a sense of control arises, the feeling that we are on the right track. This feeling is important in many other types of work.

I think that knowing and doing things with understanding frees the arranger from remembering and following formulaic rules learned by heart. This is why, in the spirit of phenomenology and semiotics, I described the arranging process in so many words. There are already more than enough facts in the world today. How that information would be used and in what order is a good question. Sounds spiritless – does creativity get lost in the jungle of limitations? Prof. Bengt Holmström’s idea is: “Let’s think that creativity comes from freedom. That’s the fundamental misconception. Creativity arises from challenges, limitations and questions.”

For an experienced native speaker, the know-how of the process itself is automated to such an extent that he pays as little attention to it as possible. Accordingly, the arranger’s creative energy can be set directly and fully into the musical content itself, thoughts, rhythms, melodies, harmonies, emotional states. And not like where would I start today? Smooth control of the process leaves as much room as possible for free movements of the spirit. But first you have to “focus on what already is”, i.e. to study certain basics of music theory, to analyze ready-made music, to refine instrument skills. No information is usable until it becomes a part of us.

All the orchestral examples in the guide are so-called reductions, for illustrative purposes, i.e. fragments of the extensive score format reduced to just a few lines. They make it easy to understand how music is actually structured. This is how composers and arrangers often thought of their music at first, as the so-called “satz” score or in “first layout” format. There are several examples of top arrangers, all of which are reductions. You can easily examine them with the piano and then decide whether the instructions I gave are correct. The reader is encouraged to study and make full use of a notation program; e.g. the Sibelius notation program provides a ready-made score from the reduced form with one button press.

The music examples contain only a few melodies invented by the author, of which many variants are presented in different styles and/or with different techniques. The Standard On Love melody appears in the guide half a hundred times in different forms. This (almost always) very recognizable melody, i.e. the “thing”, the “first content” of the music, is preserved, but sometimes with a very different flavour compared to the original form. And the formal implementation therefore varies up to more than 50 times, from unison to 7–8 voices, from tonal to modal harmony, from rock rhythms to symphonic style, from swing to church choir. The examples have been available to listen to on my website.

The most important principle of the guide is this: Jazz and music are a language. Arranging is communication. Music is a language used to operate as if in a way of communication – often this idea is expressed metaphorically. But music (and arranging) are really communication, the communication of feelings, thoughts, (musical) ideas – there is a surprisingly large consensus on this today in everyday conversations and even at all levels of education. It has been said that a work of art without its communicative, semiotic aspect is just a bunch of paper, a piece of cloth, noises, a pile of stones without anything to say. This means that art is not really possible without a language/communication perspective. But then right after talking about semiotics might cause a repulsive reaction; too theoretical, too elusive. Now I’ve tried to “lower the bar” as much as possible – even at the cost of losing orthodox semiotics – so that the circle of those who discover, understand and use it expands a bit.

The more uniform the phenomenon under consideration is, the more suitable the language analogy is. At first, I took – as a starting point – the old and narrow big band perspective, which I later expanded a little, so that the reader will hopefully have the opportunity to “see and understand new things based on the old ones, in their light” (Husserl, 1970). I could say that in contrast to the current historyless, odourless and tasteless time, I stuck to an emphasized historical perspective on my subject. For me, all the older styles and trends in jazz are just as true and

art as contemporary jazz. This kind of elementary textbook in the old, strict style of jazz, one might say romantic or sentimental style, was born, which seeks a kind of ideal type of big band arrangement, strongly rooted in tradition.

Typification is one of my methods here. The mainstream of big band jazz is quite formal, and so it is particularly suitable for typification. By typification, I started distinguishing typical different ways of writing classical big band music. I got the idea from the composer William Russo (Russo, 1961), whose arrangement guide (there as 3 divisions: Nimble, Singing, Striking) has its roots. The final justification for typing came when I read Henry Mancini's corresponding guide (Mancini, 1986), where the rest of the "types" (Solemn, Colorful) were found. Then I just had to come up with descriptive names for them. But typing always does violence to rich reality, like language it limits and impoverishes. True, but without "basic grammar" and "basic vocabulary" it is difficult for us to get any kind of grip on reality, which tends – when we talk about it – to slip away from our grasp.

"Stylistically" I now limited myself to so-called nostalgic style of big band music, i.e. the kind of music I have a strong emotional connection to. What is important to me in music is the feeling, the emotional charge, which traditional jazz still strongly carries with it. I try to avoid such synchronic creation and maintenance of just-here-and-now reality in favour of a diachronic, or let's say historical, view; In favour of the fact that in all art we can always look a little towards eternity – if we only want to. "When you let the style speak in your music, then someone bigger than you speaks." That's what one could say according to Charles Taylor's ethics (Taylor, 2018). Responsibility for the thing itself, for jazz, for the tradition of big band music? Style-conscious matching can also be thought of as loyalty to one's own "Great Line". My set of questions referring to ethics is then a continuum: receiving influences ==> imitation ==> plagiarism ==> stealing. No more of that here.

I believe that from this you can go in many directions to deepen what you have learned and apply to almost any kind of music what you have learned, to write new and fresh music creatively and freely. I believe that the principles are suitable for many types of arrangements other than just writing for a big band in the style of the 1950s. In a way, I'm just presenting empty structures, the general style I've chosen just as an "example filler". I'm never going to say what kind of melodies, harmonies and rhythms the student has to "fill" the structures with.

Conclusions. The basic tone of contemporary jazz, which is somehow more anti-romantic than before, tends to emphasize the complexity of the structure. In general, is complexity (a concept referring to expression) therefore an important attribute of artistry, I have to ask. The more complicated, the more

artistic? In any case, it seems that the development of jazz went from the beginning of the 1930s to the 1960s, moving formally in an increasingly complex direction. The meaning of the structure became more and more important – at the expense of the content? What content? What if the idea of the development of contemporary art is to let the content dissolve into the function of expression, "the medium becomes the message", then it's "so what!" I will return to this question in a moment.

For me personally, Tell A Story jazz, Louis Armstrong, Lester Young, Charlie Parker and others continue to tell their most up-to-date message. Is this kind of music that speaks to me personally, even grips me – the kind that I feel directly moves the foundations of my existence – the so-called existential style in jazz? If this were the case, the core question of narrative jazz would not only be "what can I do" but also "do I have something to say"? All in all, the question is not quite simple.

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Від ідеї до нотного тексту: посібник з аранжування для біг-бенду

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Автор розглядає дану роботу як пролегомени до посібника з аранжування музичного твору або певного тематичного матеріалу для великого джазового ансамблю – біг-бенду. Робота має ґрунтовні методологічні основи. Мистецтво джазу трактується в дусі філософської феноменології (учіння Гуссерля). У розуміння аранжування автор спирається на семіотику як універсальну терію знаків, зокрема на досягнення фінської семіотики (Е. Тарасті, А. Бромс). У своїх практичних рекомендаціях щодо аранжування автор спирається на сприйнятий досвід провідних джазових музикантів (Кая Баклунда, Раймо Хенрікссона, Маркка Йоганссона і Пентті Ласанена). Також автор покладається на здоровий глузд і свій власний багаторічний досвід у сферах музично-виконавської (гра на саксофоні) та композиторської діяльності в сфері джазової музики. Композиторська та аранжувальна техніка автора рекомендацій проявлені у створеній ним «Джазовій мессі» та ін. творах. Аранжування визначається як дія перетворення існуючих музичних ідей (композицій, мелодій) за допомогою певних прийомів у нову композицію, часто призначену для нових інструментів. Аранжування джазової музики – це творча діяльність, бачення старого в новому світлі, бачення можливостей, орієнтація на те, чого ще немає. Основна увага у посібнику приділяється тональній музиці. Автор спирається на горизонтальну організованість (ритм, фразування, логіку) і вертикальний порядок (функціональну гармонію і колорит), тобто на єдність синтагматичної та парадигмальної організації музичної форми, яка має своє коріння в природній мові. Розкривається значення взаємовідношень між тональним та модальним музичними «світоглядами», тобто між полюсом «вербального» музичного мислення та полюсом більш архаїчного «картинного», просторового переживання світу в звуковій формі, антагонізм між якими має величезне значення для джазу та всієї музики. Секрет творчої роботи полягає у гармонічному русі між цими протилежними полюсами.

Ключові слова: мистецтво джазу, біг-бэнд, аранжування, мова, інструментування, нотний текст, композиція, феноменологія, семіотика.