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CINZIA GIZZI

# **JAZZ ARRANGERS II**

**AUTHOR PAGES IN A HISTORICAL PATH  
OF MUSICAL ANALYSIS.  
THE CONTRAPUNTALISTS**

*presentation by*

**ALESSIO SEBASTIO**





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## INDEX

- 9     *Presentation by Alessio Sebastio*
- 11    *Introduction*
- 15    Chapter I  
      Conclusions to the first volume  
      1.1. Traces of the past, a summary, 17
- 25    Chapter II  
      The contrapuntalists
- 31    Chapter III  
      Johnny Carisi – *Israel* (1949). Or of the modal ambiguity  
      3.1. Work Plan, 46 – 3.2. Conclusions, 47 – 3.3. Essential chronology, 49
- 53    Chapter IV  
      Bill Holman – *Kingfish* (1953)  
      4.1. Work plan, 64
- 65    Chapter V  
      Bill Holman – *Stompin' at the Savoy* (1955)  
      5.1. Work Plan, 73 – 5.2. Conclusions, 76 – 5.3. Essential chronology, 77

81 Chapter vi

George Russell – *All About Rosie* (1957)

6.1. All About Rosie first movement, 84 – 6.2. Architecture of the first movement, 95 – 6.3. All About Rosie second movement, 96 – 6.4. Architecture of the second movement, 98 – 6.5. All About Rosie third movement, 102 – 6.6. Architecture of the third movement, 115 – 6.7. Conclusions, 116 – 6.7.1. *Elements of rupture with prevailing jazz orchestral literature*, 116 – 6.7.2. *Elements reminiscent of the jazz tradition*, 117 – 6.7.3. *Other features of the Work*, 118 – 6.8. Essential chronology, 118

121 *Glossary*

137 *Abbreviations*

139 *Bibliography*



## PRESENTATION

The reasons that make this new work by Cinzia Gizzi, which follows a first volume and hopefully anticipates a third, a work of great importance for jazz students at conservatories and scholars of the jazz phenomenon more generally, are at least two. The first, intentionally and directly pursued by Gizzi, is to offer texts, a method, to propose her own approach to learning jazz arranging, tracing and examining in a clear, simple but not simplistic, concise and essential manner, what has happened from the first decades of this music's existence to the present day. Through the precise analysis of carefully and wisely chosen orchestral passages, the scholar is led to examine some of the milestones in the art of arranging in an effective way, with immediate practical implications. This is not a handbook for arranging, as the book is quite in-depth, but it is structured in such a way that it could also be used as such if necessary. What has just been said constitutes an added value of this work that, it must be said, Gizzi has been undertaking since the late 1980s, albeit at intervals.

The second reason that makes this volume, as well as the previous one, a valuable work is the following, probably not directly pursued by Gizzi, but evidently realized in the development and course of this work. Jazz, as we know it and as it has developed throughout its historical period up to the present day, with the exception of an early period that we can identify from its origins up to the 1920s, has always placed

the solo aspect at the center of its development and of the musical phenomenon as a whole. In other words, the history of jazz is predominantly a continuous succession of great soloists who have characterized its historical periods, epochs, styles and language.

The reasons for this view of the evolution of jazz music are many, and perhaps this is not the right context to go over them. The orchestras, although they have had a notable weight in jazz, both in terms of quantity and quality of the music produced and offered, often remain in the background, unjustly relegated mostly to that period that we frame with the expression Swing era, which goes approximately from the first half of the 1930s and, despite the appearance of Bebop and its subsequent derivations, continues with great impulse until the mid-1950s, when it is ousted in the tastes of the general music-loving public by rock and roll, which in a very short time becomes the musical object coveted by most.

In reality, orchestras of greater or lesser size and value have always existed, since the 1920s and even after the advent of Rock and Roll. This volume by Gizzi, like the previous one, has the merit of rebalancing the valued relationship between the great soloists and the orchestras in the right way, offering a different point of view on the developments of jazz, outlining a sort of history of jazz arranging in which the figure of the arranger regains new light and visibility, also as the creator of musical projects aimed precisely at highlighting the great soloists, Ellington, Basie, Mingus, are just some of the most eminent names.

The study of this work in its entirety, therefore, will be useful not only to those who wish to approach the fascinating and stimulating art of arranging, but to all jazz scholars who, through these readings, will be able to complete and integrate their preparation on the subject, adding the added value of an additional and original point of view on jazz music.

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## INTRODUCTION

This second volume pursues the intent to analyze orchestral pages in a historical path of musical analysis. In the radio broadcasts, — which I had the opportunity to conduct in 1990 and from which I derived some of the content of these writings —, the works chosen to represent each composer appeared in greater number. Nevertheless, the few testimonies contained in the first volume and the ones here include analysis of some documents deemed of considerable interest in the evolution of jazz orchestral literature, already selected at the time.

Arrangers, particularly pioneers, have not yet been given due recognition, despite noticing an ever-growing interest in them. Some of the causes of this delay may be related to the recent genesis of new music; the difficulty of finding autograph pages, particularly in Italy; the attention directed more towards soloists and improvised language; little attention is paid by contemporary education to the historical path of an art, as too demanding and perhaps impractical. The methods are many and always growing, the historical paths still deserve further study and dissemination.

Due to the lack of studies on the subject, I claim to believe that any honest contribution can help to fill this gap, aware that the content can't be exhaustive of the subject neither give the deserved recognition to individual artists, for whom there would need comparative studies of their entire works, to highlight the style that distinguishes

each composer. This second option, however, did not meet my curiosity to look for the traces, even just a few, able to represent even the least part of the evolution of this art, to derive a general framework capable of embracing a broad vision and also, why not, a chronological list of the authors of the past, an operation that I tried to do in the first essay. Hence the idea of concentrating on individual works, selected from those proposed in a radio broadcast, the starting point for these essays<sup>(1)</sup>.

In the first book, it seemed to me indispensable to include the *characters of the drama* (to mention Duke Ellington) and their works in the historical context in which they operated, in this second part I will expose only analytical work, always ordered in a chronological criterion, animated by the curiosity to enter into the details of an orchestral page, to capture the elements that distinguish the author's compositional approach, starting from a broad vision of the work to narrow down the field to details that seem deserving of interest. Dig for signs of the author's partial compositional process and evolving art of arrangement.

Practice confirms to me that the unique voice of the artist is present in each of his works, even in the seemingly simple ones, and that the orchestral scores analyzed, though insignificant in number, include in part the innovative elements introduced over the years, which concern: the form of the arrangement; the greater attention paid to the unifying parts; the increasingly evolved harmonies — in line with the changes that were taking place in the learned literature —; the orchestral ensembles — reformed with the inclusion of instruments rarely used in the origins —; the combinations of the big band with the symphonic orchestras. The uniqueness of the master artists, whether we are talking about improvisational or interpretative language, or literary language, can emerge from each sample taken into consideration and the distinctive traits are recognizable as an indelible imprint. The conclusions to the first volume, set forth below, are a brief summary of the constituents found in the analyses, to summarize past footprints and pick up, in a sense, the thread of the discourse.

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(1) In the late 1980s, the Author conceived and conducted three cycles of radio broadcasts on the history of jazz, for the first Rai network, edited by Adriano Mazzeletti: *Breve storia del piano jazz* (1988); *Storia degli arrangiatori* (1989); *I pianisti hard bop* (1990).

My role as a teacher, which for more than a decade has involved teaching subjects related to composition and arrangement, stimulates my curiosity to verify the criteria set forth in the methods, to find out when and to what extent composers adopt the techniques set forth in the manuals, with what freedom they treat them, pointing out the novelties that are not found in books, books that, nevertheless, it should be emphasized, derive or at least should derive principles directly from the sources. This is a very important aspect because it affects the expressive freedom of those who approach this subject: learning the techniques as an end in themselves would not make sense. In some artistic fields, the study of sources is the at heart of the subject, prompting painters, for example, to “copy” the work of predecessors, to trace their footprints; a practice I have always cultivated for both literary and musical works. In part, especially in the chapter *The bebop tradition*, we had found evidence of the methodologies set forth in the manuals, which were recommended precisely because they were inferred from sources.

The section devoted to Stan Kenton concluded the first part and, because of the complexity of the material and the currents, was the only one not to present a detailed analysis of a score. In this second volume, however, features Bill Holman, a fruitful collaborator of the leader and the creator of important scores characterized by a different approach to writing, innovative works for the period in which they saw the light of day.

The glossary includes additional entries related to the new content. The bibliography, discography and internet sites refer to the examples cited both in the text and in the glossary.



## CHAPTER I

### CONCLUSIONS TO THE FIRST VOLUME

Many early arrangements still used the extended form of the composition, which included more episodes and distinguished the masterpieces of early composers and arrangers such as Jelly Roll Morton and James P Johnson. Most of the arrangements use an original or another author composition. The presence of the soloists improvisation means that the arrangements must contain a structure, suggested by the leader, on which to perform the improvisations, even when the form includes several episodes.

The form of the starting piece, in the years to come, will be simplified, if one may say so, adopting for many years, and in most cases, the two prevailing structures of the twelve-measure blues form and the thirty-two measure song form, at least throughout the bebop period. The exceptions of Duke Ellington, considered the first composer to use the extended form, proves the rule.

Despite this limit related to the form, the arrangers will introduce over time many innovations in the construction of melodic lines, in the pronunciation, in harmonization, orchestrations, unifying parts, exploring more and more the compositional and expressive resources of the big band, working on the form only afterwards. As changes in language, harmony and voicings took place, the authors introduced these innovations in their work, sometimes anticipating trends that would

become part of jazz music. However, the pillars on which a jazz arrangement is based: Introduction, thematic presentation, parts reserved for improvisation, parts in which the arranger makes a single section speak (*sax soli*, *trumpet soli*<sup>(1)</sup>, to be clear); or reaches the apex with the involvement of the entire orchestra (*shout chorus*)<sup>(2)</sup>; thematic re-proposition, if any, they are all constituents that characterize the arrangements since the origins, works that the pioneers have given to the following generations, free to explore and innovate them, fixed points that will remain for a long time, subject to reworking to create an infinity of combinations able to exploit and expand the big band expressive potentials.

In the footprints left by Don Redman's early works those pillars, that we have partially listed, were already present. Count Basie's style saw his musical conception reproduced in the arrangements of Neil Hefti. Duke Ellington's inspiration, genius, uniqueness and freedom in the treatment of compositional material could be discovered in the details of a simple score. The bebop language transferred to the big band distinguished the compositions of Gil Fuller and Tadd Dameron, and the vertical sonorities utilized are reproduced in arranging methods that follow a historical path, as starting techniques in the study of this matter.

A fossil that would later open to a completely new approach that, while keeping intact the soul of this music, was the obvious sign of a new creation, we had found it in George Russell's contribution to *Cubano be* (1947)<sup>(3)</sup>. His linear writing would soon have produced a theory and a compositional orientation that revealed a new path. While the inclusion of the Cuban music by Dizzy Gillespie would be one of the first examples of other music influences with jazz. So we had seen converging in the big band writing two new ways: Latin music and cultured music. Two streets frequented and still researched by composers.

A contemporary example of past element preservation, despite the novelty of content, in my opinion, is provided by the arranger Maria Schneider, who manages to create innovative works while preserving, in many cases, the ensemble that distinguished the big band of the origins. It always amazed me the way in which the author, despite the

(1) See glossary.

(2) *Ibidem*.

(3) GEORGE RUSSELL, *Cubano Be*, arranged by George Russell. Full Score, JLP-8690, Edited by Rob Dubogg and Jeffrey Sultanof, Saratoga Spring NY 12866 USA, Jazz Lines Publications.



unchanged ensemble, was able to propose elements of strong innovation. A new organic in itself influences the compositional approach, subtracting for example the practice of alternating the wind sections, a mark of the arrangements of the past, and following a path that in the melodic composition, in the choice of voicings, is able to discover and reveal always new and unusual combinations and sounds. Keeping a “historic” ensemble and making it sound “new” is a subtle operation that deserves praise and consideration.

### 1.1. Traces of the past, a summary

The three Don Redman’s scores gave us an insight of his time and information on the compositional process.

*Shufflin’ Sadie*<sup>(4)</sup> (1927) displayed an extended form, within which the thirty-two measures song was included, a formal element that will become a kind of dogma in the arrangements, starting from the Thirties and for much of the bebop period. As we have already said and as we will see in the following examples, the evolution of writing that concerns both the improvisation and the modernization of vertical structures, will be accompanied by the simplification of the starting form, with the adoption of the blues or the song structure, before returning, in the coming years, to intervene on the form. *Sax soli* and *clarinet soli* were already present in Don Redman’s arrangement. The combination of soloist and orchestral interventions already had its balance and presented unifying parts such as Introduction, Interlude, modulation and Coda.

*Save it Pretty Mama*<sup>(5)</sup> arrangement, from 1929, while moving in a sixteen measures form, amazed at the composer’s care in creating

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(4) *Shufflin’ Sadie*, from the double: *The Indispensable Fletcher Henderson* (1927/1936). Jazz Tribune N° 30 – RCA. *Fletcher Henderson and His Orchestra*: Russel Smith, Joe Smith, Tommy Ladnier (tpt); Jimmy Harrison, Benny Morton (tb); Buster Bailey (cl, ss, as); Donald Redman (as, cl, arr); Coleman Hawkins (ts, cl, bari); Fletcher Henderson (p, arr, ldr); Charlie Dixon (bj); June Cole (tu); Kaiser Marshall (dr). New York, 11 march 1927.

(5) *Save it Pretty Mama* from *Le Favolose Big Bands* – Disc enclosed to issue 11/82 of *Musica Jazz* – Rusconi Editore. *McKinney’s Cotton Pickers* (12 players) with: John Nesbitt, Langston Curl (tpt); Claude Jones (tbn); Jimmy Dudley, Don Redman (cl, as); George Thomas, Prince Robinson (cl, ts); Todd Rhodes (pno); Dave Wilborn (bjo); Ralph Escudero (tu); Cuba Austin (dr). Arr. Redman. Solos: Curl, Redman (vocal), Rhodes. Camdem, 8 april 1929.

diversity in orchestral combinations, assigning the parts to the wind and the rhythm section with truly surprising attention. There were counterpoint elements with the clarinet providing a counter-melody to the trumpet, recalling the *guide tones*<sup>(6)</sup> lines, frequent in counterpoint style which characterized the cool jazz musicians and those belonging to the Third Stream Music. In the thematic re-presentation the more elaborate melody and harmony contributed to an increase in tension and to produce variety in crescendo. The unifying parts, such as Interludes of various lengths, the Coda, the modulation within the work, were all compositional choices that gave depth to the arrangement. The conclusion, with an orchestral *Tutti* and the initial melody rewritten by the composer as a sort of improvisation and played by the whole orchestra, showed a further process that will be found in the following works.

The much-declaimed *Chant of the Weed*<sup>(7)</sup> of 1931 had an extended three-episode structure, which included the thirty-two measures song form. The melodic line built on the whole tone scale (a very common color in classical music but rather new in the orchestral jazz field of the time), underlined by the descending chromatic progression, introduced a particular impressionist nuance. In fact, the contrast with the consequent phrase, harmonized with four voices in close position, created a pleasant and very truthful contrast and, to today's listening, we could almost say touching in its ingenuity, a sort of meeting between modernity and tradition. From a harmonic point of view, the prolonged use of the secondary dominant substitution (sub V7/v), as well as the tensions #11 and #9, contributed to the presence of sounds exploited largely later on. The alternation of wind sections, which determined the writing for large jazz ensemble, was very evident in the orchestration, to underline a fixed point to which Don Redman contributed in large part and which still represents a distinctive trait of writing for big band. In practice, we had found all those components that are still taken up and manipulated

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(6) See glossary.

(7) *Chant of the Weed*, Don Redman and his Orchestra, Brunswick 6211. Don Redman (as); Bill Coleman, Henry Red Allen (tp); Fred Robinson, Benny Morton, Claude Jones (tbn); Edward Inge, Rupert Cole (cl, as); Robert Caroll (ts); Horace Henderson (pno); Bob Ysaguirre (cb); Manzie Johnson (dr); New York, 24 september 1931. In the album Various Artists, published 25 june 2006, Charly Records.

to form a traditional jazz arrangement: the *shout chorus*<sup>(8)</sup>; the supports (*backgrounds*) to the soloists' interventions; the unifying parts (*Interlude* and *Coda*); the balance between improvisation and ensemble writing.

Benny Carter's arrangement, *Jump Call*<sup>(9)</sup>, of 1946, despite the recent date, in relation to the historical path we are facing, provided an excellent example of arrangement in the swing style of the Thirties. The kind of arrangements that made the listener jump on the chair and aroused enthusiasm and emotional participation in the reiteration increasingly rich of pathos, capable of producing an active and almost cathartic involvement of the listeners. We had noticed the presence of reiterative melodies, of *call and response*<sup>(10)</sup> between wind sections, of an interpretation that provided for an ever-increasing emotional participation of the performers, powered by this reiteration that brought you back to ancestral songs, to reach the climax at the end. This type of layered writing, which reached the apex gradually adding elements, leaving out the emphasis of the interpretation, had in itself elements of counterpoint in the crossing of the independent lines played at the same time. Arrangements of this kind have thrilled and animated crowds of spectators and could still represent a style, if not for the pathos that distinguished the performances of the past, difficult to reproduce, because linked to a feeling of the times. A similar score, emptied of such an interpretation, could be lacking in its lymph. Despite the choice of style, the most recent date of this arrangement showed elements of modernity in the *trombone soli* harmonization, of which we had provided an analysis. The harmonizations feature reharmonizations of approach notes, a technique widely discussed in the methods that retrace this art. Another compositional element to take in consideration as well as a further element of verification.

*King Porter Stomp*<sup>(11)</sup> (1935) by Fletcher Henderson provided an example of reworking a piece by another author. A kind of work that

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(8) See glossary.

(9) *Jump Call*, arranged by Benny Carter, Full Score, JLP-8497, Saratoga Springs NY, Edited by Rob Buboff and Jeffrey Sultanof, Jazz Lines Foundation Publications.

(10) See glossary.

(11) *King Porter Stomp* (1935), Benny Goodman and his Orchestra, New York, 1 July 1935, Victor 25090; Benny Goodman (cl); Bunny Berigan, Nate Kazeibier, Ralph Muzzillo (tpt); Red Ballard, Jack Lacey (tbn); Toots Mondello, Hymie Schertzer (as); Arthur Rollini, Dick Clark (ts); Franck Foeba (pno); George Eps (g); Harry Goodman (cb); Gene Krupa (dr). In the album *In the Mood: Music of the Swing Era*, Vol.2. Timeless Music Company, 2012.

requires a different approach, because it involves reshaping the starting piece, through a procedure that can be much more challenging than the arrangement of an original composition. The score presented all the components that characterize big band writing as: unifying parts (*Introduction*, *Interlude*, *Coda*, the latter a trademark of Fletcher Henderson's style and widely quoted by later composers); antiphonal exchanges between the wind sections; a greater space left to soloists' improvisations; various kinds of *background*, alternating the colors of the different family sections; more frequent harmonizations involving both separate sections and large ensemble. Dynamics that alternate moments of intensity and less involvement, reaching the peak at the end of the arrangement.

The style that distinguished the Count Basie orchestra was fully represented in the Neil Hefti's masterpiece, *Teddy the Toad*<sup>(12)</sup>, of 1957.

Also in this case the rather recent date, compared to the historical path, is not in contradiction, because we are talking about an interpretive style that has resisted over the years, faithful to the director's conception. Uniqueness of style that this arrangement preserve in the alternation of dynamics, from *pianissimo* to *fortissimo*; in the simplified harmonic progression during Basie's minimalist piano solo, in contrast with the moments of orchestral ensemble characterized by a more complex harmonic progression; in the spaces left to the rhythm section; in the choice of the blues structure, so recurrent in the Count Basie repertoire. A simple appearance that revealed the finesse of writing in the details, such as the effect of making you feel an Introduction and an Interlude, while remaining in the twelve-measure form. We can say that just one example, thanks to the arranger's talent, was able to fully represent a style that distinguished the orchestra over the years, an important chapter in the history of the arrangement. The first example of artists (like Neil Hefti, Frank Foster, Sam Nestico, Quincy Jones, to name a few) who were able to reproduce the musical design and the interpretation dictated by the leader since the beginning and pursued throughout his career.

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(12) BASIE, *E=MC²*. Count Basie Orchestra + Neil Hefti Arrangements, 1958, Roulette Records, Birdland Series SR – 52003.