

# Jazz Scores and Analysis

Vol. I

Richard Lawn

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# Contents

## *Jazz Scores and Analysis, Vol. I*

<i>Preface</i> .....	vi
<i>Acknowledgements</i> .....	x
<i>Chapter I – John Fedchock, “Ten Thirty 30”</i> .....	2
Selected Discography .....	3
“Ten Thirty 30” .....	3
Lead Sheet Reduction Melodic Overview .....	3
“Ten Thirty 30” Lead Sheet .....	5
Lead Sheet Reduction Harmonic Overview .....	6
Basic Lead Sheet Form .....	9
The Arrangement: Form .....	10
General Observations .....	15
Chord Voicing .....	19
Saxophone Voicing .....	19
Brass Voicing .....	21
Ensemble Voicing .....	22
Bass Doubling .....	30
Solo Background Writing .....	30
Harmonic Embellishments .....	30
Passing Chords and Substitute Chords .....	31
The Interview .....	31
Annotated Full Score .....	38
<i>Chapter 2 – Bob Mintzer, “Ellis Island”</i> .....	80
Selected Discography .....	81
“Ellis Island” .....	82
Lead Sheet Reduction Melodic Overview .....	82
Lead Sheet Reduction Harmonic Overview .....	86

*Chapter 2 – Bob Mintzer, “Ellis Island” cont.*

Lead Sheet Reduction Rhythmic Overview.....	90
Basic Lead Sheet Form.....	90
The Arrangement.....	90
General Observations.....	90
Form.....	91
Chord Voicing.....	95
Saxophone Voicing.....	95
Brass Voicing.....	95
Bass Doubling.....	97
Solo Background Writing.....	98
Development Section.....	98
Interview with Bob Mintzer.....	99
Annotated Full Score.....	106
<i>Chapter 3 – Vince Mendoza, “Homecoming”.....</i>	<i>127</i>
Selected Discography.....	129
“Homecoming”.....	130
Lead Sheet Reduction.....	131
Melodic Overview.....	131
Harmonic Overview.....	135
Basic Form.....	136
The Arrangement.....	137
General Observations.....	139
Orchestration.....	140
Chord Voicing.....	141
Woodwind Voicing.....	147
Brass Voicing.....	147
Bass Doubling.....	147
Solo Background Writing.....	148
Fugato Section.....	148
Final Shout Chorus.....	150
Interview with Vince Mendoza.....	153
Annotated Full Score.....	161

<i>Chapter 4 – Jim McNeely, “Absolution”</i> .....	206
Selected Discography .....	207
Basic Score Reduction .....	208
Formal Design .....	211
Melodic Elements.....	211
Harmonic Elements .....	212
The Arrangement.....	213
General Observations .....	217
Rhythm.....	218
Harmony and Voicing .....	220
Orchestration .....	224
Solo Backgrounds.....	225
Development Section (Shout Chorus).....	228
Interview with Jim McNeely.....	231
Annotated Full Score .....	240
<i>Chapter 5 – John Hollenbeck, “A Blessing”</i> .....	269
Selected Discography .....	270
“A Blessing” .....	271
Melodic Overview.....	271
The Song Lead Sheet .....	272
Harmonic Overview.....	273
The Arrangement.....	274
Overview .....	274
Form .....	275
Melodic Elements.....	277
Harmonic Elements .....	284
Solo Section .....	288
Orchestration .....	290
Final Observations .....	291
Master Class Excerpts and Interview with John Hollenbeck .....	291
Interview with John Hollenbeck.....	293
Annotated Full Score .....	298

<i>Chapter 6 – Darcy James Argue, “Transit”</i> .....	339
Selected Discography .....	339
“Transit” .....	340
Lead Sheet Reduction Overview .....	345
Formal Design .....	345
Rhythmic Elements .....	345
Melodic Elements .....	347
Harmonic Elements .....	348
The Arrangement .....	349
General Observations .....	355
Rhythm .....	355
Harmony, Voicings, and Orchestration .....	357
Bass Doubling .....	362
Solo Backgrounds and the Shout Chorus .....	362
Interview with Darcy James Argue .....	364
Annotated Full Score .....	372
<i>Appendix I – Conventions, Assumptions, and Definitions</i> .....	419
<i>Appendix II – Additional Suggested Listening</i> .....	423

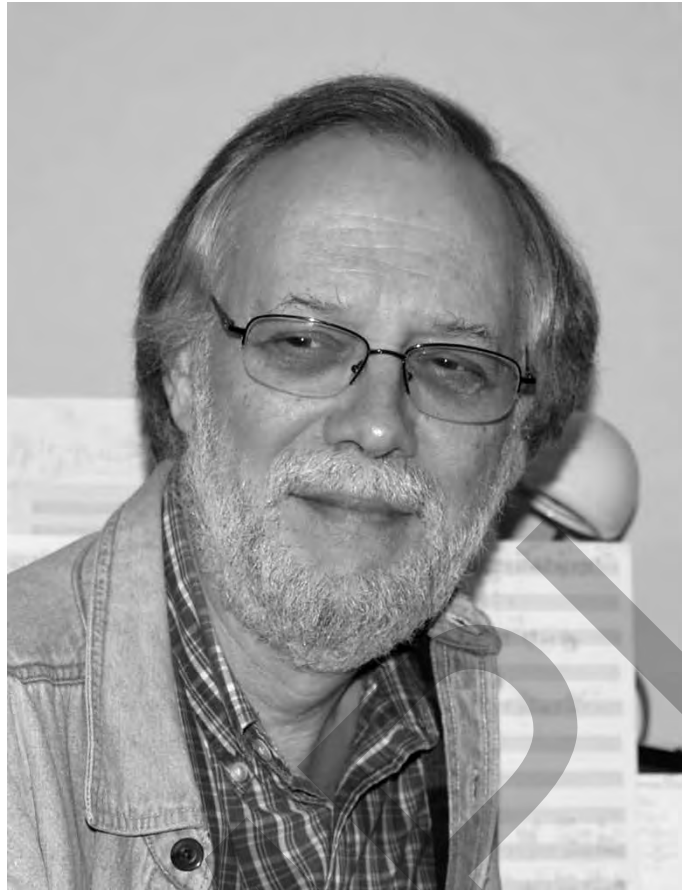
# Preface

In 1982 Rayburn Wright, head of the Jazz and Contemporary Media Department at the Eastman School of Music, published what has become an iconic book that occupies a special place on many writers' bookshelves. It has become an important teaching and learning resource for many of us since its release. Published by Kendor Music, *Inside the Score* is revered by students and professionals worldwide. If you want to learn about jazz arranging and composition techniques employed by three master composer/arrangers from the 1960s and '70s, this has been one of the best resources to consult. The book offers in-depth analysis of several scores by Sammy Nestico, Thad Jones, and Bob Brookmeyer.

Ray was my mentor at Eastman, and his approach to analyzing nine big band jazz ensemble scores by these three composers was thorough, revealing, and a revelation to many of us learning the art and craft of jazz composition. With his guidance the reader learns, through analysis, about pacing, voicing techniques, orchestration, harmonization, and re-harmonization techniques, form, solo background writing, balance, and other essential aspects of writing for the jazz ensemble. I treasure the complimentary copy of his book Ray sent me, one of the first graduates of the MM program he created, shortly after its publication. At the time I was Director of Jazz Studies at The University of Texas at Austin, my second such position.

I had been contemplating the need for a sequel to this book for some time, hoping to one day take on this challenge. Aside from some work by the late Fred Sturm, another Wright protégé, no one has followed a similar approach to examining scores by more contemporary jazz composers since Wright's book was released in 1982. Jazz composition for large ensembles has developed significantly, and in some cases has made what could be described as quantum leaps since the 1960s and '70s. Just as small group jazz has evolved, so has composition for the large jazz ensemble. It was therefore because of Ray's early inspiration, and my desire to learn about and share the work of more contemporary composers whose work I have enjoyed playing and rehearsing, that I decided to tackle the task of creating what I hope to be the first of two volumes.

Aside from the debt I owe to Ray for putting me on the right track in 1976, I am very grateful to the six composers who contributed scores to this project, which could best be described as six case studies. Grammy nominated composers and arrangers John Fedchock, Bob Mintzer, Vince Mendoza, Jim McNeely, John Hollenbeck, and Darcy James Argue are among the jazz composers whose work I have admired as a performer, teacher, and writer. Their willingness to share their art in this way is quite extraordinary, especially in this age when work is pirated from artists on a daily basis. Despite this climate, "Les Six" were enthusiastic about the project. We worked together in the selection of a score, and they proofed my work to ensure I hadn't missed an important detail or misrepresented an aspect of their score. Selecting a score was a difficult process, since in many cases composers' early works are exciting for first revealing their unique, signature characteristics, which then mature over time. In most cases we decided together to use more mature examples of their work for these case studies. Each chapter dedicated to one of these six composers will include recommendations for other recordings and scores of interest that could serve equally well as an outstanding study, revealing aspects of their style that might not appear in these pages.



## **Acknowledgments**

Dr. David Aaberg, Professor, Director of Jazz Studies at Central Missouri State University, a good friend, a great musician, and one of my first successful doctoral students at the University of Texas, used his laser-sharp eyes and theorist radar to proof my work. His advice in the early and final stages of this project was of great help. Paul Baker, my old Austin, Texas, friend, section mate, and now occasional publisher of my high school-level charts, helped me on several occasions to sort out Sibelius software problems and discover some features that after years of use I didn't even know were there! Thanks, Paul!! And speaking of help with software issues, Dr. Tom Rudolph, who is an adjunct instructor for Berklee Online, the University of the Arts, Central Connecticut State University, VanderCook MECA, and the Rutgers Mason Gross School of Music, is considered a Finale and Sibelius expert, with publications on using both applications. Tom was an excellent resource when I needed to sort out Finale issues and got me back on track in using it. He has authored multiple online courses in music technology and music history. My lifelong partner Susan has always been there for me in such endeavors, and I'm grateful for her patience and support. Chuck Sher agreed to work with me on this project, though we had never met, and still haven't! He put trust in the outcome and value in its worth. It's not easy to find publishers like Chuck, who get it and understand the musician's point of view. Lastly, this project would never have gotten off the ground had it not been for "Les Six" – the six composers who agreed to take part and offer their scores for dissection and discussion. The greatest artists are those willing to share their work and aspects of their creative process with the world so that we can better understand how they think, work, and create. The world is certainly a better place because of their work.

# TEN THIRTY 30

## LEAD SHEET REDUCTION

JOHN FEDCHOCK

$\text{♩} = 224$   
UP SWING

**A**

TPT & TEN

RHYTHMIC & NEAR MELODIC SEQUENCE

"DAAHOUD" REFERENCE

"DAAHOUD" SOLO REFERENCE

11TH #11 11TH b13 11TH

$Gm^{\flat 9}$   $Am7(\flat 5)$   $D7^{ALT.}$   $Bbm7$   $Eb^{13}$   $Am7(\flat 5)$   $D7^{ALT.}$   $Cm^{\flat 9}$   $F^{13}$   $Bm^{\flat 9}$

6

SEQUENCE

SURROUND GROUP

11TH

SURROUND GROUP

**A1**

$E^{13}$   $Bbm^{\flat 9}$   $Eb^{13}$   $Am7(\flat 5)$   $D7^{ALT.}$   $Gm^{\flat 9}$   $Am7(\flat 5)$   $D7^{ALT.}$

11

RHYTHMIC & NEAR MELODIC SEQUENCE

SIMILAR TO BAR 6

CHROMATIC 11-7-V7 SEQUENCE REMINISCENT OF "DAAHOUD" CHANGES

$Bbm^{11}$   $E(\flat 13)$   $Am7(\flat 5)$   $D7^{ALT.}$   $Cm^{\flat 9}$   $F7^{ALT.}$   $Bbm^{\flat 9}$   $Eb^{13}$   $Am7(\flat 5)$   $D7^{ALT.}$

16

**B**

NEIGHBOR, PASSING AND SURROUND TONES

TPTS

TROMBONE TRANSITION TO BRIDGE

C. BROWN REFERENCE

SAXES #11

$Gm^{\flat 9}$   $Cm^{11}$   $Gb^{13}$   $F^{13}(\flat 9)$   $Bbmaj9$   $A7^{ALT.}$   $9TH$   $Ab^{13}$   $G+7$   $D\flat 7$   $Cm^{\flat 9}$

21

8 BAR EXTENSION TO BRIDGE BEGINS

SAXES

REFERENCE TO C. BROWN/S. ROLLINS "WHAT IS THIS THING CALLED LOVE"

$Cm7$   $F7(\flat 9)$   $E7(\flat 9)$   $E7(\flat 9)$

Apply the same approach to voicing the next chord shown in the third measure of Example 1.8b. In this case the initial close voicing includes five unique pitches in close position. The last 2 bars in this example show how Fedchok achieved the voicing he used for the chord on beats three and four in measure 101.

These same techniques have been applied in voicing the other chords in Example 1.8a. No doubt this is all done in an intuitive manner by the arranger.

Since there are no extended saxophone solis, the following excerpt represents one of the rare passages where the section is harmonized for an entire measure of eighth notes. Like most writers, Fedchok favors player courtesy over adhering strictly to the correct spelling of accidentals. In examples such as this enharmonic respellings have been used in the interest of making examples more clear.

Example 1.9 – Measures 247–249 (in concert pitch)

### Brass Voicing

Brass are voiced in close or open position and chorale style voicing. Trumpets are primarily used in close voicings over the trombones, which are either in close position or open chorale style. Figures moving at this fast tempo often dictate that trombones are voiced more often in close position. These four-part trombone voicings rarely include the root. Trombones generally feel more agile and crisp when scored in close position.

As the brass reach the culmination of a phrase, or when lead trumpet is scored closer to the top of the staff or above, trombone voicings are opened up if they have been closed. Opening up the brass voicing for a penultimate chord or final chord of the phrase helps to emphasize the impact of the phrase

## Selected Discography

*East Coast Blow Out* – WDR Big Band – Lipstick Records, 1991

*Sound Bites, Stockholm Jazz Orchestra* – Dragon, 1995

*Carnegie Hall Jazz Band* – Blue Note, 1995

*\*Lickety Split* – The Vanguard Jazz Orchestra Music of Jim McNeely – New World Records, 1997

*Nice Work, Danish Radio Orchestra* – Da Capo Records, 2000

*Group Therapy* – Omni Tone, 2001

*Swiss Jazz Orchestra, Paul Klee* – MOHS, 2006

*Up from the Skies, The Vanguard Jazz Orchestra Music of Jim McNeely* – Planet Arts Records, 2006

*Quest for Freedom* – Sunnyside, 2010

*Dedication Suite, DR Big Band* – Cope Records, 2011

*Danish Radio Orchestra Play Bill Evans* – Stunt Records, 2012

*The Frankfurt Radio Big Band Jim McNeely: Barefoot Dances and Other Visions* – Planet Arts, 2017

## “Absolution”

The analysis that follows in this chapter will build on the following brief analysis provided by the composer in the notes that accompany the CD *Lickety Split*:

“This is another instance in which the sound of the major soloist (Rich Perry) served as the impetus for the piece. The opening section is a dialogue between two melodic groups. They’re working out a couple of different pitch groups and a couple of different rhythmic cells. This occurs over a three measure vamp.” (Shown in Examples 4.1 and 4.2.)

Example 4.1 – Primary pitch groups



#### Example 4.2 – Bass ostinato



“They finally conclude with the ascending “agreement” in  $\frac{3}{4}$ . Using an octave triplet figure they then eject Rich from their number, leaving him to solo and work out his inner voice over a two measure isorhythmic vamp in E minor.”

#### Example 4.3 – E minor vamp



“It’s a five-attack rhythmic pattern with a six pitch cycle, so it keeps spilling over itself.”

#### Example 4.4



“The ensemble offers a brief ‘prayer’ (chorale), then ensues a litany in which all the wind players offer a series of brief solo statements, each one answered by the full band. The band builds to a climax, then Rich emerges for a final cathartic solo statement. The ensemble restates the  $\frac{3}{4}$  phrase and extends it to become a final statement of absolution.”

McNeely’s brief explanation of “Absolution” is actually quite good as a “Cliff Notes” analysis of a very complex composition based on simple ingredients. Analysis of this score requires a somewhat different approach from that used on the other scores in this study. For that matter, each of these contemporary scores has required a somewhat unique approach. What follows will expand significantly on McNeely’s brief description of this very contemporary score.

## Basic Score Reduction

While the nature of this composition does not lend itself well to lead sheet reduction, what appears as Example 4.5 is a best effort at condensing the essence of melodic, rhythmic, and harmonic material that serves as the basis for the arrangement.

**Prayer** – This brief section in the score alludes to the Penitential Rites granting absolution by the pastor. This section appears at m.173 in the timeline.

**Benediction** – A brief closing section featuring the full ensemble in very open, slow moving parallel minor 11th, major, and dominant suspended chords. This final section can be seen in the outline from m.189 through the end of the piece.

It would be wrong to suggest that the composer consciously followed this entire model, and I suspect he did not; but it is not unlikely that his life experiences had some influence on the development of the composition, through either conscious or subconscious memory. This will no doubt come up in the interview, which will either confirm or disprove this theory.

The timeline that follows as Example 4.7 shows more clearly how this score unfolds.

Example 4.7

	[22] 0:54	[37] 1:32
A Section — Introduction of primary pitch groups and rhythm cells presented in dialogue between instrument groups in unison or octaves	A <sup>1</sup> Section — development of rhythmic cell 2	B Section — contrasting material based on mode
3 bar bass isorhythmic pattern from F Mixolydian	Section ends in open 5ths	Ens in vertical planning; Isorhythm transposed down mi 2 <sup>nd</sup> to E Mixolydian
<i>21 bars</i>	<i>15 bars</i>	<i>9 bars</i>

[46] 1:55	[53] 2:18	[65] 2:47
A <sup>2</sup> Section — Reprise of PG1 Rhythmic diminution and augmentation	Coda or C Section — Coltranesque transition	Tenor Sax Solo Begins
Isorhythm returns to original key center	Based on PG2 & reaches climax and solo send-off.	New 2 bar bass isorhythm derived from E Dorian
<i>9 bars</i>	<i>12 bars</i>	<i>12 bars</i>