

# ***Introduction To Arranging by Artemus***

The process of musical arrangement refers to the adaptation of a melody and/or its harmony for an instrument or suite of instruments.

The earliest examples of arrangement can be found in classical music. A popular compositional technique was to arrange or incorporate traditional melodies, or folk tunes, into an original composition. For example, Brahms' Hungarian Dances, various works by Vaughan Williams, and Tchaikovsky's 50 Russian Folk Songs for four hands.

In many later works, particularly during the late classical and throughout the romantic era, many examples of arrangement of established melodies by earlier composers can be found, with the style updated to that of the composer. Rachmaninoff famously applied his own unique voice to many popular melodies of earlier composers, eg. Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini (Op. 43), Variations on a Theme of Chopin (Op. 23), Variations on a Theme of Corelli (Op. 42), as well as many transcriptions for piano, such as Rimsky Korsakov's Flight Of The Bumblebee and Kreisler's Liebesfreud and Liebesleid.

Jazz music is renowned for arrangement, with countless artists gaining recognition through reinterpretations of jazz “standards” to exhibit their own singular style. The platform of jazz continues to be a fresh source of reinterpretations of both classical (eg. Eugen Cicero, Massimo Faraó) and modern (eg. Alex Skolnick, Brad Mehldau) melodies.

Modern music also provides endless examples of popular songs and melodies rearranged and played in a variety of hugely different styles from funk to electronica, to rock and extreme metal.

An often overlooked form of arrangement is that of simplification, yet it is of great importance. Melodies originally written for large ensembles are often transcribed for solo instruments or for smaller ensembles. Additionally, music is often be simplified to enable beginners to play popular, recognisable melodies, which is essential for retaining the beginners interest in learning music.

The essential techniques and methods of arranging include the assignment of melody and harmony to various instruments, depending on the style and purposes of arrangement. Musical interest is commonly created through the use of modulation, rhythmic rearrangement, change of meter, and embellishment of the harmonies. In particular, reharmonisation is used to affect the style and add different colours to the music either by adjusting the harmony to alter the character of the music, or to create more tonal texture by including appropriate harmonies for passing tones. The aspects of reharmonisation are too numerous to outline within this introduction, but a multitude of resources can be found on the subject. Although reharmonisation is synonymous with jazz, it's use is substantive to many forms of arrangement, particularly where the aim is change style.

The skills and qualities required of an arranger are numerous and demanding. It is undoubtedly essential to possess a well-trained ear for harmony, not only for the ability to identify and transcribe arrangements, but to be able quickly formulate ideas for an arrangement; one needs to be able to hear in ones “inner ear” how melodies and harmonies would sound. Knowledge of musical form, counterpoint and voice leading is also an essential quality, which can enable coherency in an arrangement. It goes without saying that transcribing and scoring abilities are also a necessity; not only to write the music but to make it easy to follow for the musicians involved.

An accomplished arranger will also be acquainted with a large variety of musical styles and understands the capabilities and the qualities (timbres of different registers) of various instruments as well as how combinations of instruments can work together. Some proficiency on a musical instrument, especially a polyphonic instrument, helps when experimenting with ideas. Lastly, an arranger must be creative and their work should show originality. Ideally, the arranger would be intimately aware of both the form of the original music and the purposes of the arrangement, as well as a passion for the music itself.

As a final note, variety is the key to fresh and interesting music, thus two important elements are necessary:

- i) knowledge of theory and instrumentation, in order to colour the music's tone and incorporate appealing textures; ensure the music is balanced and the score is logical.
- ii) listening and *appreciating* many different styles of music.

Recommended reading:

- Macpherson, S., *Form In Music*, New and Revised Edition, **1930**, Joseph Williams Ltd.
- Macpherson, S., *Melody And Harmony*, **1920**, Joseph Williams Ltd., London.
- Levine, M., *The Jazz Theory Book*, **1995**, Sher Music Co. CA.
- Corozine, V., *Arranging Music For The Real World*, **2002**, Mel Bay Publication, Pacific MO
- Williams, R., *Composing For The Jazz Orchestra*, **1961**, The University of Chicago Press
- Dobbins, B., *Jazz Arranging And Composing*, **1986**, Advance Music