

DLA doctoral thesis

Peter Endre Wolf

Jazz arrangement

Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music

Doctoral School  
of art-and culture-historical sciences  
registered under number 28

Budapest

2014

## **I. History of research**

Lots of books were written about jazz arrangement<sup>1</sup>, mostly in English. After reading them I can say, that they were written all with a very similar aim: they were primarily intended for a course book. This also means that they presuppose an elementary level of knowledge, but subsequently pose increasingly complicated tasks to the reader (especially to the student).

The books develop from the simple description of melody, rhythm, harmony and form to the more complex, so it is hard to determine for whom is the book intended. Most books do not aim at professional musicians, nor composers and they do not include examples of the most prominent masters. Probably because of copyrights-problems, the majority of the writers give their own

---

<sup>1</sup> In the jazz world orchestration is called arrangement

examples from their own compositions. In fact, there are some among the authors who made it so with a significant oeuvre behind, for example William Russo, but the majority of the books use illustrations, which are almost exclusively school exercises and not extracts of masterly arrangements.

Unfortunately, there is very little literature in Hungarian, but that little is very useful. Among the publications the *Jazzvilág*, the book of János Gonda and *Jazz* of András Pernye are outstanding. Of course both authors are eminent musicologists. János Gonda's book examines from every possible point of view the evolution and the history of jazz, and the great composers and artists.

## **II. Resources**

A number of books – written in English – helped me in my thesis, they can be found in the bibliography. Four of

them are essential reading: books of János Gonda, András Pernye and Károly Friedrich's unpublished manuscripts, the *History of Jazz*, and *Orchestration for Big Band* which contain examples of prominent American Composer's work with explanations.

In addition, I have used as source hundreds of music pieces I have heard over many years, especially during my research preparing this doctoral thesis. Although the opinions found on the internet are quite contradictory, YouTube is undoubtedly a mine of information and unlimited source of music and videos. You can find on YouTube everything from the earliest jazz recordings to the recordings of present day, many times very well documented.

In some cases I had both the recording and the score of the music. The arrangements (i.e. scores) of the famous big bands are now available for everyone. However, the aim of my research was different, and I mainly concentrated on the works of Hungarian composers and arrangers. As a result, I turned to the recent and present experts and after informing them

about my aim, I asked for compositions and/or arrangements to describe the methods they use.

### **III. Method**

In the first part of my thesis, I presented step by step the development of the elements of jazz music, i.e. the rhythm, the melody, the harmonization and the form. I try to dispel the gloom around improvisation. After studying the elements I examined the music of all the people, who played any role in the evolution and history of jazz, including primarily their folk music, and including any music, which could have an impact on the process. African folk songs influenced the development of jazz similarly as did the European Protestant chorals.

In the second part I covered the jazz musical instruments one by one. From the point of view of orchestration the vocals were to be examined, therefore I discussed the possibilities of singing as well. Fortunately,

you can track the development of vocal/chorus in the same way like the instrumental music.

The third part – the most important for me – describes the arrangement in general, I analyzed the methods how to make arrangements for small ensemble, than for big orchestras. To describe this I took the works of János Gonda, Tamás Deák, Attila László, Károly Friedrich, Kornél Fekete-Kovács, Gábor Fehér, Viktor Hárs, Miklós Malek and Kálmán Oláh. I was given at my disposal not only the scores, but the music as well.

## **IV. Results**

The aim of the doctoral thesis was to study the work of the creators of Hungarian jazz compared to the mainly American international trends. First I examined the evolution of the American jazz; how bands were formed; what meant the meeting of the African, Afro-American and European music; how they evolved and

developed newer and newer styles, and all of these through the lens of the arrangements.

The analog of these can be found in the Hungarian history of jazz as well. For the Hungarian jazz musicians to take part in the world's jazz life – despite of the difficulties – many people's effort was needed. At the time of the hermetic cultural isolation it was hard to get hold of records of contemporary works. Thanks to short wave radio one could listen to broadcasts of jazz programs. It was most important to share their knowledge and experience.

I could not have written my doctoral thesis without the cooperation of the above mentioned experts. They revealed their secrets, for example, how to arrange a harmony for brass. The vast majority of these masters are teachers who believe knowledge must be handed down. As result, contribution of nine works of composers were examined. The masters gave me permission to publish the conclusions as well as the sound illustrations. In my doctoral thesis I was dealing with an area, that – to my knowledge – no one else did so far. Thanks to everyone who helped!

In **Chapter V**. I had to write about my work related to the thesis. The most important is the great number of recordings I have made, at which I was musical director and so I had the opportunity to study the scores of numerous composers.

From the mid-1960s, I have composed music, including jazz. I had solo concerts, and also with ensembles (bands of Vilmos Jávori, and Aladár Pege). In my compositions I have endeavored to bring together elements of jazz music and the contemporary classical music. One of them is my piano concerto, which was presented in 2013, featuring József Balog – piano, and the Miskolc Symphony Orchestra, conducted by László Kovács.