Reharmonization 101: Tips and Tricks from Pro Arrangers that Give New Life to Old Music Kevin Olson, Utah State University

"The word 'arrangement' might be applied to any piece of music based on or incorporating pre-existing material. In the sense in which it is commonly used among musicians, however, the word may be taken to mean either the transference of a composition from one medium to another or the elaboration (or simplification) of a piece, with or without a change of medium. In either case some degree of recomposition is usually involved, and the result may vary from a straightforward, almost literal, transcription to a paraphrase which is more the work of the arranger than of the original composer."

Boyd, M. (2001). Arrangement. Grove Music Online, from https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com

What Can Be "Arranged"?

- Melody
- Rhythm
- Tempo
- Harmony
- Tonality
- Texture
- Instrumentation
- Form
- Style
- Difficulty Level

Choosing a Tune to Arrange

- Familiar
- Simple
- Predictable
- Significant

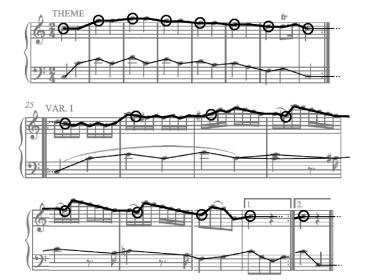
Stylistic Arranging





Melodic Arranging

Embellish melodic lines by adding non-chord tones to basic melody contour



Rhythmic Arranging

- Change meter
- Double or half rhythmic values
- Add or take away syncopations
- Add rhythmic embellishments

Structural Arranging

- Sub-hook (original, secondary theme that reappears throughout the arrangement)
- Intro, Outro, Interludes, Modulation
- Issues of unity/variety, dramatic buildup, point(s) of climax

Harmonic Arranging

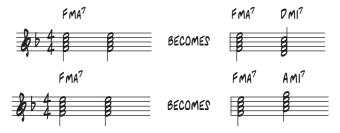
- Chord Substitution: a procedure for altering the harmonic language of a tune
- Not always a one-for-one exchange (harmonic rhythm might be altered: some theorists prefer "reharmonization")

Harmonic Structural Points

- Points of the tune when important tonic and dominant moments happen
- These also occur at important rhythmic moments (downbeats on m. 1, m. 4, etc.)
- Fill in the points between with coloristic reharmonizations.

Diatonic Substitution

• Because iii, and vi can all act as tonic chords, they can substitute for I.



 Because ii and IV share similar pitches and subdominant qualities, they are interchangeable.



Extensions & Added Chords

Extended chords: certain chords (built from thirds) or triads with notes extended, or added, beyond the seventh. Ninth, eleventh, and thirteenth chords are extended chords.



Added chords: non-tertian chords composed of a triad and an extra "added" note.



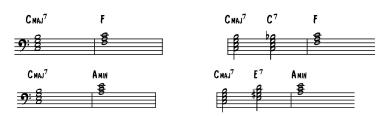
Melodic Reharmonizations

Find another chord that contains a note in your melody (either as the 3^{rd} of the chord, the 5^{th} , the 7^{th} , or another extension).



Tonicizations

Tonicize any important chord you want to emphasize by placing the V before that chord.



New Dominants



Pandiatonic & Chromatic Voice Leading

- Pandiatonicism: "using notes of a diatonic scale without the limitations of functional tonality"
- Chromaticism: "notes outside the diatonic key"
- Let a stepwise bass line dictate chord choices.



"If it sounds good, it is good." - Duke Ellington

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Notes: