

Reharmonization 101: Tips and Tricks from Pro Arrangers that Give New Life to Old Music

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"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

CLASSICAL WALTZ

NOCTURNE

ALBERTI BASS

JAZZ BOSSA NOVA

WALKING BASS

JAZZ WALTZ

POP NEW AGE

ROCK & ROLL

70S BALLAD

Melodic Arranging

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

THEME

VAR. I

1 2

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.

F F⁷ B^bMA⁷ A⁷ D⁷ E^b7(9#11)

Diatonic Substitution

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

FMA⁷ BECOMES FMA⁷ DMI⁷

FMA⁷ BECOMES FMA⁷ AMI⁷

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

B^b C⁷ FMA⁷ BECOMES GMI⁷ C⁷ FMA⁷

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.

F FMA⁷ FMA⁷(9) FMA⁷(11) FMA⁷(13)

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

F F^{ADD} F⁶ F^{6/9}

Melodic Reharmonizations

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

Tonicizations

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

CMAJ⁷ F CMAJ⁷ C⁷ F

CMAJ⁷ Amin CMAJ⁷ E⁷ Amin

New Dominants

G C B^b C B^b7 C Dmin⁷ C Fmaj⁶ C

Fmin⁶ C E^bmaj⁷ C G7(b9) C A^b7 C D^b7 C

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.

STRUCTURAL POINTS

FMA⁷ DMI⁷ FMA⁷

DIATONIC CHROMATIC

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

Notes: _____
