

ARRANGED BY NELSON RIDDLE

I	PREPARATION	PAGE 6
	1) Score Paper	
	2) How To Set Up A Score Page	
	3) Pencils, Worktable, Lighting, Stop Watch, Metronomes	
II	HOW TO SET IDEAS ON PAPER	PAGE 10
	1) Harmonization Of A Melody, Chords And Chord Symbols, Passing Tones, Bass Lines, Voice Leading, Resolutions	
	2) Key Signatures, Time Signatures, Tempo Markings, Dynamics, DaCapos, Dal Segnos, Codas	
III	THE WOODWIND FAMILY	PAGE 14
	1) Saxophones, Their Use As A Section	
	2) Clarinets, Their Use As A Section	
	3) Flutes, Their Use As A Section	
	4) The Double Reed Family	
	5) The Use Of A Classic Woodwind Set Up, Including French Horns	
	6) Electronics and Flutes	
IV	THE BRASS FAMILY	PAGE 56
	1) Trumpets, Flugelhorns, Their Use As A Section	
	2) Trombones, Their Use As A Section	
	3) Trumpets and Trombones Combined in A Brass Section	
	4) The Use Of French Horns With Brass Instruments	
	5) The Tuba Combined With A Brass Section	
	6) Electronics And Trumpets	
	7) Mutes And Brass	
V	THE PERCUSSION FAMILY	PAGE 75
	1) Mallet Instruments	
	2) The Drum Family	
	3) The Use Of Instruments From The Percussion Family To Develop Orchestral Colors	
VI	KEYBOARD INSTRUMENTS	PAGE 82
	1) The Harp, Its Use In An Orchestra	
	2) The Piano, Its Use In An Orchestra	
	3) The Celeste, Its Use In An Orchestra	
	4) The Harpsichord	
	5) The Accordion	
	6) The Organ Family	

VII THE RHYTHM SECTIONPAGE 95

- 1) The Guitar, The Banjo, The Mandolin
- 2) The Bass Instruments, String Bass, Fender Bass
- 3) The Sit-Down Drummer and His Traps

VIII VARIOUS RHYTHMS AND HOW TO WRITE THEMPAGE 105

- 1) Contemporary Rhythms
- 2) Latin Rhythms
- 3) Afro Rhythms
- 4) Ethnic Rhythms, Greek, Israeli, etc.
- 5) Various American Dance Rhythms of the Twenties and Thirties

IX THE STRING FAMILYPAGE 113

- 1) The Use of Violins
- 2) The Use of Violas
- 3) The Use of Celli
- 4) The Use of Basses
- 5) Conclusion

X THE USE OF VOICES IN ARRANGINGPAGE 125

- 1) Mixed Voices
- 2) Female Voices
- 3) Male Voices

XI COMBINATIONS OF INSTRUMENTS FROM THE VARIOUS SECTIONS OF THE ORCHESTRA TO PRODUCE FRESH AND UNUSUAL COLORSPAGE 132

XII COMBINING THE VARIOUS ORCHESTRAL SECTIONS TO FORM AN ARRANGEMENT ...PAGE 139

XIII MUSIC FOR FILMPAGE 143

XIV PERSONAL AND MUSICAL OBSERVATIONSPAGE 164

COMPLETE ORCHESTRATION-“SEND IN THE CLOWNS”PAGE 181

BIOGRAPHYPAGE 193

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTSPAGE 196

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CHAPTER 2

How to Set Ideas On Paper

1) Harmonization of a Melody

As an arranger, your task is to set forth another person's composition in the most attractive and effective manner possible within the combination of instruments available.

The composition you are given to arrange consists of a melody, and almost always, a set of chords which indicates how the melody is to be harmonized. Your flexibility and dexterity with chords will determine how speedily and effectively you can arrange a given composition.

First of all, you should become familiar with the meaning and interpretation of **chord symbols**. They were originally designed to enable a banjoist or ukelele player to accompany himself while singing a song. Later, chord symbols served the same purpose for guitarists, and in that process, have become increasingly complicated. It is important, however, that you learn to read chord symbols fluently, since many times they are the only available clues to the composer's ideas. Not too long ago, all songs were available in piano form, but in recent years, these have been frequently reduced to words, melody, and chord symbols. In most cases, where chord symbols indicate the harmony, all these elements are on one line, thus eliminating another important aide, the bass line.

In order to facilitate this short-cut, many chord symbols now indicate the bass note. For example, "Gm7/C" means that a "Gm7" is to be played in the treble, but "C" instead of "G" is to appear in the bass. Example 5 will give you a chart of the more common chord symbols in use, and next to each, the written chord each symbol represents. All these chords are "F" chords in one form or another. It would be good practice for you to write them out in several keys, since transposition is a very necessary skill to an arranger.

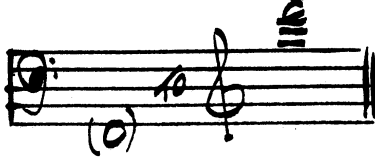
EX. 5

F	F ⁷	F ⁷ (b ⁹)	F ⁷ (+ ⁵)
F/C	F/A	F ⁷ (b ⁹)	F ¹³
F ^m ⁷	F ^m ⁹	F ^m ⁷ (b ⁹)	F/E ^b
F ⁷ (+ ⁵) ⁹	F ⁹	F ⁷ (+ ⁵) ⁹	F ^m /A ^b

5) The Accordion

This instrument, often referred to as the “squeeze box,” is uniquely useful in certain types of arrangements. It can be used successfully as “putty” to strengthen woodwind or string lines in a small orchestra, and in the hands of a capable player can be quite appealing as a solo instrument.

The practical range of the accordion is:



Its sound has a certain “continental” quality, being very characteristic of the Italian street songs, where a solo tenor voice with accordion accompaniment often constituted the complete personnel of the little strolling orchestra. Many accordions come equipped with a “concertina” stop, and can be used to give a French flavor to the orchestration. The accordion is also widely used in Latin orchestras and can give a colorful flavor to a tango or a merengue.

When using the accordion to “beef up” a small string section or a couple of clarinets, the lines played by the violin or woodwinds should simply be duplicated in the accordion part, as in Examples 108 and 109:

EX. 108

4 VIOLINS *DN/SL*

ACCORDIAN

EX. 109

2 CLARS

ACCORDIAN