

DAVID BERGER

Creative Jazz  
Composing & Arranging III

WRITING  
*for*  
SMALL  
GROUPS

***Such Sweet Thunder***

Such Sweet Thunder Publishing  
[www.SuchSweetThunderMusic.com](http://www.SuchSweetThunderMusic.com)

## Note to the Reader

Each chapter in this book includes full and partial recordings, an in-depth analysis, and full scores. While I would have loved to provide everything in one place, the high cost of publishing such a package would have made it impossible for me to produce, and very expensive for you to buy.

In order to make this book affordable and practical, we have put the music videos and complete scores online. Each video shows pages from the score that you can follow as you read and listen. With the scores and videos separate from the text, you can easily go back and forth between them without having to turn pages.

Each score has a concert reduction added at the bottom of each page—all reeds and all brass parts are shown together, in concert key. Each reduction has tags showing the different techniques used.

🎵 To download these recordings and scores free of charge, go to:  
[www.suchsweetthundermusic.com/pages/cjca3-accompanying-files](http://www.suchsweetthundermusic.com/pages/cjca3-accompanying-files)

All the arrangements in this book are available at [SuchSweetThunderMusic.com](http://SuchSweetThunderMusic.com) and all major digital music services.

### PERSONNEL ON THE RECORDINGS

#### Conductor & Arranger:

David Berger

#### Reed 1 (Alto Sax, Clarinet, Flute)

Matt Hong

#### Reed 2 (Tenor Sax, Piccolo, Clarinet)

Dan Block

#### Reed 3 (Baritone Sax, Bass Clarinet)

Carl Maraghi

**Trumpet** Brian Pareschi

**Trombone** Wayne Goodman

**Piano** Isaac ben Ayala

**Bass** Sean Conley

**Drums** Jimmy Madison

**Vocal** Camille Thurman

**Engineering** Fernando Lodeiro

**Mixing** Oscar Zambrano

**Mastering** Peter Axelsson

Recorded at The Hit Factory, New York City,  
October 22, 2021.

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**Creative Jazz Composing & Arranging III:  
Writing For Small Groups  
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## Introduction

In the fourth grade I took up the trumpet in school. Later that year I attended a concert at our elementary school. I'm sure the school chorus sang, but all I remember is our school band playing. I was mesmerized. I couldn't wait until the next year, when I could join the band.

During the concert, I had this amazing thought, "Wouldn't it be cool if I composed a piece for the band to play?" I can still see my 10-year-old self sitting in our auditorium that doubled as the gym. Don't ask me where that idea came from, but to this day it sticks with me. Wouldn't it be cool to write music and have musicians play it? After writing over 2000 arrangements and compositions, it's still cool. It's better than cool... it's why I wake up in the morning.

The act of writing music involves two processes. One is the logical physical expression of putting dots on pieces of paper that musicians will understand and interpret properly. The other is the mysterious creative process that imagines music that I would like to hear—what all the instruments (and singers) will sound like. Where the sounds in my head come from most likely is the tens of thousands of hours of listening and playing music. My memory has stored up these sounds, and then I let my subconscious mind mix them all up and spew out who-knows-what. In the process of getting these ideas onto paper in notation, I consciously impose the slightest bit of organization, so that it all makes sense. It is orderly, and yet surprising.

In my twenties, I studied trumpet with one of the greatest trumpet players of the 20th century, Jimmy Maxwell. When a student would call him on the phone and ask him if he taught how to play jazz, Jim's answer was, "I can teach you to improvise, but no one can teach you how to play jazz." Jazz is a special music that is inside us. It's personal.

In this book I will show you how to organize your thoughts and your music, but the music you will create depends on the music that has influenced you, and your willingness to unhook from your ego and tell the world your absolute truth. Hopefully, you will find this book encouraging in those regards.

My listening and study of music from Palestrina and Bach through Stravinsky and Bartók, and Jelly Roll Morton and Duke Ellington through Gil Evans has inspired me and set the high standards I aspire to. To paraphrase Sir Isaac Newton—I've been standing on the shoulders of giants.

Learning to write music is a long process. It takes a lot of patience. When I was young, I read that that you learn more from your failures than your successes. Those failures hurt, but you never forget them. They push you to find workable solutions. Learning to arrange and compose jazz requires that you speak the language of jazz fluently—like a native.

When I grew up in the 1950's, I didn't hear much jazz, but I heard lots of classical music and swing music. The classical music was on a superior aesthetic level, but somehow, it didn't speak to me as an American. Swing music was everywhere—on radio, TV, movies and records. Even TV commercials used swing music. Little of this music was deep or great, but it reflected the rhythms and inflections of our American speech patterns. When I got interested in jazz at the age of 12, I was immediately drawn to the swing aspect of it. Gradually, I began to discern what was popular swing music and what was jazz. Some of this was along racial lines—Joe Williams was jazz, Frank Sinatra was pop—and some was on a deeper level of integrity and truthfulness—Bill Evans vs. Peter Nero.

I quickly found Duke Ellington and Count Basie as models for big bands. They were on TV and radio often. I started listening to jazz radio stations with hip New York disc jockeys like Billy Taylor, Ed Beach and Symphony Sid. When I went to a record store, I would look for the sides that I had heard on those shows. The first jazz record that I bought was Horace Silver and the Jazz Messengers. It was on the Blue Note label. I played that record so many times that I wore it out. If you want to know how to write for 2 horns, listen to that record... it's all there.

Aside from Horace, I had many other influences in small group jazz writing: Dizzy Gillespie, Thelonious Monk, Charles Mingus, Benny Golson, Thad Jones, Duke Pearson, Gigi Gryce, Rod Levitt, John Lewis, Gil Evans, Gerry Mulligan, and Bob Brookmeyer, as well as the great piano trios of Bill Evans, Erroll Garner, Sonny Clark, and Ahmad Jamal. I encourage you to listen to a wide variety of classic records and to analyze the arrangements.

In this book I will focus on how to write for quartet (1 horn plus rhythm section), quintet (2 horns), sextet (3 horns), and octet (5 horns). I will also discuss writing for 4 horns; this is covered in the 5-horn charts and analyses.

After you finish reading this book and have a grasp on basic arranging concepts, you may want to read my other two composing and arranging books: *Creative Jazz Composing and Arranging, Volume 1* (writing for big band) and *Creative Jazz Composing and Arranging, Volume 2: Writing for Singers*, which also discusses songwriting. They are a bit more advanced than this book, so I encourage you to read this one first. Also, writing for smaller groups gives you the ability to be economical, an invaluable skill when writing for larger ensembles. It will lead to leaner and more imaginative scores for big band and orchestra.