

A MODEL OF COLLABORATIVE CREATIVITY: THE ARRANGEMENTS
OF NELSON RIDDLE FOR FRANK SINATRA
AND ELLA FITZGERALD

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This dissertation explores the themes of collaboration and creativity in the relationship between arranger Nelson Riddle and vocalists Frank Sinatra and Ella Fitzgerald. It examines the balance between structure and freedom as well as the specific musical results that emerge from collaboration between an arranger and vocalists who are considered among the greatest in their fields. An examination of their interactions, musical scores, and performances, reveals that the constraints that are present in a collaborative effort can lead the artists to find a shared process to make a creative, unified product.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Collaboration is practically universal in music. “[A]lmost all musical genres involve collaboration, including both the scored string quartets and symphonies of the European tradition as well as improvised genres like American Jazz.”¹ Studies of collaboration in jazz have often focused primarily on the complex interactive dynamic among improvisers. Indeed, “[g]roup musical improvisation is one of the purest examples of human collaboration.”² But in many cases the collaboration between musicians happens before the performance. The creative efforts begin with assembling an ensemble, planning an album theme, picking the repertoire, and composing and arranging the music. Even the casual communication about non-musical subjects has an implicit effect on the music.

A frequent theme in studies about collaboration in music is about how to negotiate the “balance between structure and freedom.”³ The idea that individuals must limit their creative freedom for the sake of the overriding structure of the shared project ignores the fact that composers always deal with limitations when creating music. They are limited by their culture, the genre, the timeframes, the sounds, the instruments, and infinite other factors. More generally, music is governed and therefore limited by the laws of physics. Additional limitations imposed by collaboration are miniscule in comparison to the opportunity for creative inspiration that can arise. In the best case musicians not only adhere to the structures imposed on the shared project, but also seem to create a sense of

¹ Keith Sawyer, “Learning Music from Collaboration,” *International Journal of Educational Research*, 47, no.1 (2008), 57.

² Sawyer, “Learning Music,” 50.

³ Sawyer, “Learning Music,” 50.

freedom that transcends the structure. Each individual has access to a creativity that would not have been possible outside of the group, and the resulting work manifests all of the parties' combined creativity. This dissertation examines the relationship between arranger and vocalist and will contribute to the scholarly conversation about jazz arranging and the necessary aspect of collaboration.

The work that the music arranger produces to support and accompany an artist has an enormous impact on the success of the product. Though both parties naturally bring separate views to the project, there must be a shared vision and an environment of trust. A successful arranger creates accompaniment that is in context with the style of the soloist, the composition, the lyric, the venue, and the genre. To capture all of these qualities the arranger must be knowledgeable, skilled, sensitive, intuitive and flexible. At its best, collaboration between the arranger and artist creates work that transcends the abilities of either as an individual.

The specific material under examination is two of the most successful Nelson Riddle arrangements written for two of the greatest popular singers, Frank Sinatra and Ella Fitzgerald. Sinatra is considered to be one of the greatest vocalists of popular music and had an extraordinary ability to make a personal connection with his listeners. Mel Tormé noted that, "Frank Sinatra was singing to us and about us."⁴ His name is practically synonymous with "American popular singer, and his singing represents a

⁴ Peter J. Levinson, *September in the Rain: the Life of Nelson Riddle* (New York, NY: Billboard Books, 2001), 12.

consummation of this longstanding tradition not likely to be equaled.”⁵ His style exhibited a high degree of control over articulation, rhythmic feel, and he demonstrated great sensitivity to his pronunciation of the lyrics. His microphone technique allowed him to be extremely expressive at medium volumes and his “extraordinarily clear enunciation” allowed him “to concentrate on shading and nuance.”⁶ He was able to convey the story of the lyric while “expressing the excesses of human emotion.”⁷

Ella Fitzgerald, known as “The First Lady of Song,” is often considered the greatest of jazz vocalists. She collaborated with many of the most prominent names in jazz and toured the world throughout her six-decade career. She had a “bright or youthful timbre, pure intonation across a vocal range that spanned three octaves, impeccable phrasing and diction, and ‘horn-like’ improvisational skills and rhythmic dexterity.”⁸

Riddle was an arranger, composer and conductor of American popular music. Early in his career he was a trombonist and arranger for several big bands. “Long considered among the very best in his field, Riddle’s genius derived from a keen artistic perception that allowed him to write arrangements that both respected the spirit of the music at hand and conformed to the particular personalities and skills of the artists with whom he was working.”⁹ In 1951 he joined NBC radio and Capitol records where “he worked with many prominent popular singers, among them Peggy Lee, Judy Garland, Nat

⁵ Henry Pleasants and Keir Keightley, "Sinatra, Frank," *Grove Music Online*. Oxford Music Online (2012).

⁶ Pleasants, “Sinatra.”

⁷ Pleasants, “Sinatra.”

⁸ Jessica Bissett Perea, “Fitzgerald, Ella (Jane),” *Grove Music Online*. The Grove Dictionary of American Music, 2nd edition, (2015).

⁹ Norman David, *The Ella Fitzgerald Companion*, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc., 2004), 124.

‘King’ Cole and Ella Fitzgerald”¹⁰ as well as Sinatra. Though best known for his work with Sinatra, it is notable that he helped Cole to initial success with arrangements of “Mona Lisa,” “Unforgettable,” and scores of other recordings. And his collaboration with Fitzgerald produced a “definitive five-volume George Gershwin ‘Songbook’” and six more albums. But his success with Sinatra was the catalyst to a thriving career including many arrangements for Broadway, film and television, and continued collaborations with popular singers.

Both Nelson and Sinatra had worked for Tommy Dorsey before working together. Riddle spent that time “absorbing Dorsey’s brand of swing and [bringing] it into a modern context”¹¹ by using different colors such as muted trumpets, flutes, French horns and strings. For Sinatra, the time with Dorsey led to great fame among young people in the early 40s. However, an extremely busy touring, broadcasting and recording schedule took a toll on Sinatra’s voice, and his popularity began to suffer. Though he was recording ballads arranged by Axel Stordahl for Columbia, he was not as successful as he had been in the past. In 1953 Sinatra signed with Capitol Records to record “in a more congenial, jazz-oriented context.”¹² This partnership led to many successful “recordings using backup arrangements by Billy May, Gordon Jenkins, and most notably Nelson Riddle, whose expert handling of big band and strings drew out the many facets of Sinatra’s musical personality to excellent advantage.”¹³

¹⁰ Mark Tucker, "Riddle, Nelson," *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press, accessed May 28, 2015.

¹¹ Levinson, *September*, 13.

¹² Pleasants, “Sinatra.”

¹³ Levinson, *September*, 12.

The collaborations between Riddle, Sinatra and Fitzgerald worked to mutual advantage. Riddle was “the musical architect of [Sinatra’s] amazing”¹⁴ career revival in 1953 owing “much to Riddle’s alternately introspective and swinging arrangements.”¹⁵ And his work “gave full vent to [Sinatra’s] interpretative skills ... that highlighted his sense of rhythm and unconventional timing, establishing his image as a finger-snapping hipster.”¹⁶ Riddle had a different role in his collaboration with Fitzgerald than with Sinatra, as Fitzgerald’s career was already well established by the time they met. He did not need to make or reinvent Fitzgerald, but rather complement her style in the context of the specific music she was recording. The “albums made by Ella Fitzgerald with Nelson Riddle as the musical director are superb and feature some of the singer’s most inspiring work.”¹⁷

Vocal music from the popular jazz idiom of the 1950s provides rich material to study as it often uses relatively large ensembles; has colorful lyrics, melodies, and harmonies; and caters to a sophisticated audience. The selected pieces are chosen on their success as gauged by their popularity and effectiveness, the availability of the scores, and their contrasting styles. The first piece is Cole Porter’s composition “I’ve Got you Under my Skin” from the 1956 Sinatra album, *Songs for Swingin’ Lovers!*¹⁸ The second piece is the George Gershwin ballad, “I’ve Got a Crush on You,” released on the 1959 album,

¹⁴ Levinson, *September*, 12.

¹⁵ Tucker, “Riddle.”

¹⁶ Richard Buskin. “Classic Tracks: Frank Sinatra ‘I’ve Got you Under my Skin,’” *Sound on Sound*, December 2012, <http://www.soundonsound.com/sos/dec12/articles/classic-tracks-1212.htm>.

¹⁷ David, “Fitzgerald,” 125.

¹⁸ Frank Sinatra, *Songs for Swingin’ Lovers*, Capitol Records W653, 1956, compact disc.

*Ella Fitzgerald Sings the George and Ira Gershwin Songbook.*¹⁹ An arrangement of a medium swing tune by a male vocalist and a ballad by a female vocalist will provide a small sample of two styles of popular music from that era. They illustrate a variety of techniques that Riddle used to capture the essence of the music and bring out the finest performances from the solo vocalists.

This dissertation is part of my lecture recital, which is be written for studio orchestra and feature vocalist Kate McGarry. The final section of this paper discusses the results of the collaboration between McGarry and me, as well as the influence of the analyses of the Riddle arrangements on my own. It is not my intention to copy the exact techniques used by Riddle, but rather to gain insight to a general sensitivity he employs to create the most complementary setting.

There is growing scholarship on the role of collaboration in theatre, business, dance, education, music, and other creative domains. Research regarding music and creativity by psychologists has “traditionally focused on the internal mental processes of individual performers,” neglecting the collaborative aspects of musical production.²⁰ However, viewing creativity as a social activity and “in many cases an explicitly collaborative endeavor” has been more prominent in recent academic literature.²¹ The *International Journal for Educational Research* dedicates an entire issue to musical

¹⁹ Ella Fitzgerald, *Ella Fitzgerald sings the George and Ira Gershwin Songbook*, Los Angeles, CA: Verve, 1959, compact disc.

²⁰ Keith Sawyer, “Learning Music from Collaboration,” *International Journal of Educational Research* 47, no.1 (2008), 50.

²¹ Karen Littleton and Dorothy Miell, *Collaborative Creativity: Contemporary Perspectives* (London: Free Association Books, 2004), 1.

collaboration within educational settings²² and the *Psychology of Music* journal investigates the role of collaboration in a wide variety of musical contexts.²³ Research recognizes that collaboration involves more than drawing upon each individual's creative ideas and finding common ground. It can be "highly emotionally charged and deeply personal"²⁴ as all parties must let go of their deeply held aesthetic sense for the sake of compromise. Collaboration "sets up 'a safe space to hear criticism, explore ideas'... "and both accept one's personal limitations yet move beyond them with the help of the other."²⁵ It may seem logical to imagine that at its best, collaboration is smooth and effortless, but it is not necessarily "about the absence of tension [and] may involve 'the fruitful cultivation of tension."²⁶ The resulting creativity is not several individual inputs, but rather "is found in the group process. Group creativity occurs on a collaborative, social plane."²⁷

In spite of the profound impact jazz arrangers have had on the "presentation of jazz music" there has been only "rare scholarly acknowledgement" of its importance.²⁸ Most of the manuscripts of the great arrangers are unpublished, lost, or kept locked in a private library, inaccessible to the general public. In particular, the ways in which

²² Dorothy Miell, Karen Littleton, and Sylvia Rojas-Drummond, "Music Education: A Site for Collaborative Creativity," *International Journal of Educational Research*, 47 no.1 (2008), 1-78.

²³ *Psychology of Music, Society for Education, Music and Psychology Research*, 34, no.2.

²⁴ Karen Littleton and Dorothy Miell, *Collaborative Creativity: Contemporary Perspectives* (London: Free Association Books, 2004), 1.

²⁵ Seana Moran and Vera John-Steiner, "How Collaboration in Creative Work Impacts Identity and Motivation" in *Collaborative Creativity: Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. Miell, Littleton, and Rojas-Drummond (London: Free Association Books, 2004), 16.

²⁶ Moran, "Motivation," 16.

²⁷ Keith Sawyer, *Group Creativity: Music, Theater, Collaboration* (New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 2003), 9.

²⁸ Fred Sturm, *Changes Over Time: the Evolution of Jazz Arranging* (United States: Advance Music, 1995), 8.

arrangers have been able to bolster and help the featured artists in performances and recordings have rarely been studied. The current arranging method books such as *Arranged by Nelson Riddle* by Nelson Riddle, *Jazz Arranging Techniques: From Quartet to Big Band* by Gary Lindsay, *Changes Over Time* by Fred Sturm, *Inside the Score* by Rayburn Wright, *Basics in Jazz Arranging* by Paris Rutherford, *Exploring Jazz Arranging: an Interactive Guide to the Techniques and Aesthetics* by Chuck Israels, *Jazz Arranging and Composing: a Linear Approach* by Bill Dobbins, *Arranging and Composing for the Small Ensemble* by David Baker, and *Sounds and Scores* by Henry Mancini, either do not address arranging the music to feature a vocalist, or do not present any in depth analysis of these particular arrangements. The Israels and Rutherford arranging texts do explicitly address writing for vocalists, with some basic analyses; and Nelson Riddle, the arranger under study for this dissertation, does offer specific advice for arranging for a vocalist.

Methodology

This paper examines the specific arranging techniques that Riddle and I use to complement the vocalists. I analyze and discuss key sections of the following pieces:

1. "I've Got you Under my Skin" as arranged by Riddle for Frank Sinatra.
2. "I've Got a Crush on You" as arranged by Riddle for Ella Fitzgerald.
3. My arrangement of "Shake Down the Stars" composed by Jimmy Van Heusen with lyrics by Eddie DeLange.

Scores, recordings, and quotes from Riddle, Sinatra, Fitzgerald and others, guide the discussion about arranging and collaboration. Though the analytical techniques presented in the method books are geared toward jazz arranging in general, they can be

focused on writing for a featured vocalist. These techniques include analysis of form, instrumentation, intensity, orchestration, motifs, dynamics, articulations, chord-voicings, register, background figures, countermelodies, and use of consonance versus dissonance. A table on page 41 presents a brief comparison of the two Riddle arrangements based on several of the elements. In addition, song selection, lyrics, and word-painting techniques are analyzed and discussed within the context of a vocal feature.

The discussion based on the analyses of Riddle's arrangements ties into the general theme of collaboration. The underlying goal is to illuminate the way in which the collaboration affects musical choices and spawns creativity. In addition, this dissertation uncovers the general and specific ways that Riddle is able to complement the featured vocalists within the collaborative relationship. I use this information to guide my arrangements for my collaboration with Kate McGarry.

CHAPTER 2

“I’VE GOT YOU UNDER MY SKIN”

Cole Porter was a “thoroughly trained popular songwriter”²⁹ who was known for his puns and sexual references in his lyrics, which were perfectly coupled with sophisticated melodies and harmonies. Though he had numerous hits, “I’ve Got You Under My Skin” performed by Sinatra “marks one of those rare occasions when popular taste and critical judgment align. Critics tend to view the song as a high-water mark for popular music in the twentieth century.”³⁰ Sinatra’s “perfect...powerful...goose-bump raising” version of the Cole Porter standard demonstrated “angular dissonance put to...effective use in mainstream popular music, Riddle here displaying a capacity for multi-stylistic juxtaposition akin to that of Charles Mingus.”³¹ Riddle considered the album *Songs for Swinging Lovers!* to be “perhaps the most successful album” he made with Sinatra.³² Sinatra gave so much verbal input on musical projects that Riddle was barely able to take notes fast enough.³³ Sinatra could be “agonizingly specific” -- Riddle recalls that Sinatra mentioned that he wanted “sustained strings” for the backgrounds.³⁴ Riddle incorporated this suggestion, and added to it noting that the “strings, by observing crescendos in the right places, add to the pace and tension of such writing without getting

²⁹ Deane L. Root and Gerald Bordman, "Porter, Cole," *Grove Music Online*, Oxford *Music Online*, Oxford University Press.

³⁰ Ira Wells, "Swinging Modernism: Porter and Sinatra beneath the Skin," *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 79, no. 3 (2010), 975.

³¹ Will Friedwald, *Sinatra! The Song is You* (New York, NY: Scribner, 1995), 203.

³² Nelson Riddle, *Arranged by Nelson Riddle* (Secaucus, N.J.: Warner Bros. Publications Inc., 1985), 169.

³³ Riddle, *Arranged*, 170.

³⁴ The in-house producer Voyle Gilmore “couldn’t tell Frank what to do – nobody could – so he had to sit back while Frank stopped a take and talked to a band section or the conductor, trying to get things the way he wanted them.” Buskin, “Classic Tracks.”

in the way.”³⁵ It was sometimes Sinatra who was able to elicit Riddle’s and his own desires from the musicians. If the orchestra did not play the dynamics correctly, “Frank would suddenly turn and draw from them the most exquisite shadings, using the most effective means yet discovered, sheer intimidation.”³⁶ In this manner of trading ideas, Sinatra and Riddle worked in close collaboration throughout the pre-production and performance.

In addition to the explicit collaboration such as planning, verbal directions, and gestures, there is also an implicit collaboration that is evident when examining the music. Riddle considers Sinatra’s capacity including vocal range, tone quality, emotional expressivity, phrasing, time feel, and story-telling ability. Riddle demonstrates awareness of numerous musical considerations such as the lyric, range of the melody, form, available instruments, performance capacity of the musicians, recording space and available technology.³⁷ Another component of Riddle’s success was the importance he gave to “simplicity” and “the presentation of ‘clean cut’ ideas.”³⁸ This clarity allowed the predominant melodies to shine unobstructed. With his deep understanding of the music, arranging techniques, and sensitivity to the artist, Riddle creates a highly detailed and subtle arrangement that serves as an exquisite accompaniment for Sinatra.

³⁵ Riddle, *Arranged*, 169.

³⁶ Riddle, *Arranged*, 171.

³⁷ According to John Palladino, the engineer in the Capitol recording studio, the arranger “had to know some of the pitfalls of recording” ... “and Nelson became very adept at that.” “With everything going at the same time – sustained strings against rhythm against the trombones and saxes – it was amazing how Nelson pulled it off, balancing his licks so that I could lower the mics a little bit.” Buskins, “Classic Tracks.”

³⁸ Riddle, *Arranged*, 164.

Even though the roles of the two men differ, a sense of collaboration is present throughout the performance. The arrangement is fixed but because it is so dynamic,³⁹ cohesive, and well balanced, Sinatra has ample inspiration and freedom for creative exploration. Riddle constantly varies the form, intensity level, and orchestration techniques in order to effectively feature the vocalist, set the lyrics, and generate interest. The contrasting input, especially the dynamic variation, keeps the listener off guard and creates a sense of motion and anticipation. “Riddle’s arrangement underpinned Sinatra’s deceptively effortless-sounding vocal with a series of orchestral crescendos.”⁴⁰

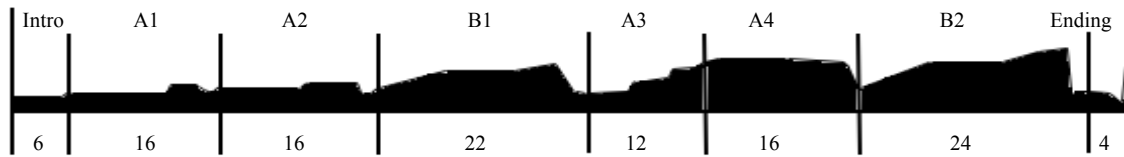
Example 2.1 uses the analysis technique from *Inside the Score*⁴¹ of creating a “dynamic contour chart” to present a visual representation of the overall form. This chart shows how the arrangement is divided into three sections of intensity: the initial melody statement from the beginning through B1, an instrumental feature from A3 through A4, and the final recap of the bridge from B2 to the ending. These sections are similar in that each one generates excitement by building intensity and then quickly dropping toward the end.

³⁹ Riddle was “convinced that dynamic shadings are a vital part of presenting music effectively.” Riddle, *Arranged*, 171.

⁴⁰ Buskin, “Classic Tracks.”

⁴¹ Wright, Rayburn, *Inside the Score: a Detailed Analysis of 8 Classic Jazz Ensemble Charts* (Delevan, N.Y.: Kendor Music, 1982.)

Example 2.1: Dynamic contour chart of Riddle’s arrangement of “I’ve Got you Under my Skin.”⁴²



“I’ve Got you Under my Skin” has no verse. The form is AAB, with 16 mm. A sections and a 24 mm. B section. Working with such a strong composition and unusual form, Riddle could have created a solid arrangement with no alterations to the form, and with routine four and eight-bar phrases for the intro and ending. Furthermore, with the experienced orchestra headed by Sinatra, Riddle could have omitted A3 and A4 and either had Sinatra sing the whole form again, or start at the bridge. Instead, Riddle cultivates interest and surprise: he destabilizes the harmonic rhythm by writing a 6 mm. introduction, a 22 mm. bridge (B1), which is interrupted by a 12 mm. interlude (A3). This interlude functions as an extraordinarily intense send-off for the explosive band feature and trombone solo at A4. Sinatra then enters to recap the bridge (B2), this time with more energy than the first (B1). The composition ends inconspicuously and subtly with a gentle final punctuation.

Section 1: Introduction Through B1

Riddle considered the introduction to be critically important. It sets the mood and can “make the arrangement sound like a complete thought, with its parts interrelated.”⁴³

⁴² This chart is created with the application *linesmART*, and it represents a subjective evaluation of intensity level based both listening and on evaluation of the score.

But it was his consideration of the vocalist in each part of the arrangement that made him such an effective collaborator. Riddle would “dream up some sort of a ‘catchy’ phrase” and use it throughout the arrangement so that the “subject of cohesion will be attended to in a most effective and original manner, and the singer can have his or her heart’s desire, namely: first crack at the melody!”⁴⁴ The same basic musical ideas that appear in example 2.2 form the underlying current throughout the opening melody statement,⁴⁵ appear again 4 mm. before B1, function as a motif that is used as powerful sendoff to the trombone section, and appear again at the ending. This motif not only lays a foundation of continuity in a constantly shifting landscape, but also serves as a distinct voice that contrasts with Sinatra.

Regarding the lyrics to “I’ve Got you Under my Skin,” “the preferred critical approach seems to involve taking the song’s latent sexuality and making it blatant.”⁴⁶ While Riddle’s arrangement does tap into this sexuality, it also projects a more innocent love-song quality by setting a relaxed, warm tone through the careful consideration of orchestration and use of a slow harmonic rhythm. Although the arrangement is scored for big band, string orchestra (with no bass section) and celesta, it begins with a sparse configuration (example 2.2) – trombones in cup mutes, and the woodwind section playing all flutes⁴⁷ (with the exception of the baritone sax part doubling on bass clarinet), and gentle accompaniment from the rhythm section. This orchestration creates a light, airy

⁴³ Riddle, *Arranged*, 140.

⁴⁴ Riddle, *Arranged*, 179.

⁴⁵ This motif is used in the first eight measures of both A1 and A2.

⁴⁶ Wells, “Swinging,” 975.

⁴⁷ The score gives the more typical clarinet doubles to the tenor sax chairs, if alto and bass flute are not available, but Riddle prefers the flutes. In this version, it sounds like all the flutes are present.

sound. The celesta plays rhythmic jabs and pads with voicings based on perfect fourths, and the woodwinds that are voiced in their lower registers share the trombone voicings, and add a subtle transparency. The harmonic structure begins with a pedal over the tonic as the chords gently plane diatonically from ii to I. By starting with this tonic-based harmony, the introduction conveys a sense of beginning in the middle of an idea as if it had already been playing for an indefinite period beforehand. This timeless feeling is accentuated by the basic, simple brush pattern in the drums and the repetitive melody that is played in the trombones and woodwinds. Furthermore, the unconventional entrance of the voice at m.7⁴⁸ also contributes to an ambiguous feeling of the phrase.

As a collaborative partner, Riddle is keenly aware of the vocalist's strengths and weaknesses. In this case he knows that the accompaniment must be able to support a swinger⁴⁹ like Sinatra. Riddle uses different techniques to create momentum and groove. Careful placement of the accents makes the melodic fragments between the pads swing harder (Example 2.2), and the numerous dynamic markings show Riddle's high degree of control over the orchestra. M.1 is mezzo piano for all the instruments with the exception of the bass clarinet, which has the only melodic line at mezzo forte. This line contains the notes Db, Ab, Bb, and Eb, which produce many perfect fifths and fourths that result in an open, modern sound. In addition, the bass plays a simplified version of the same idea, and the drums and guitar provide the underlying pulse. Though some voices are more prominent, the multiple layers leave some voices to be felt more than heard. The

⁴⁸ Typically the voice would enter at m.9 after 8 measures, so to enter after only 6 is unexpected.

⁴⁹ The title of the album is *Songs for Swingin' Lovers!*

combination of all these techniques creates the perfect frame for opening lyric to the piece, while leaving a great deal of flexibility for interpretation.

Example 2.2: I've Got you Under my Skin mm.1-4⁵⁰

Swing ♩ = 120

Flute 1
Flute 2
Clarinet 1 (if no alto flute)
Clarinet 2 (if no bass flute)
Bass Clarinet
Trombone 1
Trombone 2
Trombone 3
Bass Trombone
Guitar
Piano
Bass
Drums

♩ = 120

brushes

⁵⁰ Nelson Riddle, “I’ve Got you Under my Skin” as originally written for Frank Sinatra, score, edited by Keith Pawlak, Property of the University of Arizona Nelson Riddle Memorial Library, used by permission. I have entered all the musical examples into Sibelius and edited to either save space or emphasize certain features. In Example 2.2 the unused staves are hidden.

Since the harmony used in the introduction matches the harmony at the top of the form, Riddle is able to continue with the exact same orchestration throughout A1, which he does for eight measures. This technique is effective in the context of his collaboration, because he provides continuity without disrupting the flow and highlights the vocal entrance by depriving the listener of any potentially distracting material. Sinatra can now casually enter, relax on the supportive accompaniment, and effortlessly maintain the gentle mood while shining at the same time.

The opening lyrics (Lyrics 2.1) for these first eight measures are open for interpretation with the possibility of expressing love, obsession, or even eroticism. While the major tonality, consonant harmony and gentle mood, lean toward a more positive mood, further development is possible.

Lyrics 2.1⁵¹

I've got you under my skin
I've got you deep in the heart of me

Riddle frequently shifts the accompaniment, which gives Sinatra new musical spaces to explore. After 14 mm. of the ostinato pattern from the outset, Riddle finally changes the accompaniment on m.9 of A1. The rhythm section continues in the same way, but the trombones and woodwinds drop out to allow the entrance of solid, colorful string pads (Example 2.3). By creating voicings that contain the fundamental chord tones

⁵¹ The use of lyrics in this dissertation falls under the fair use provision for scholarly research. For more information refer to the AMS Fair Use Statement at http://www.ams-net.org/AMS_Fair_Use_Statement.pdf.

on the bottom while the top voice ascends through the #11 chord tone in mm. 10-11, the sense of passion increases and the already romantic nature of the string section is emphasized. The top voice also provides a subtle countermelody that moves in contrary motion to the simple, descending melody. Though it is creating colorful harmony, this countermelody does not interfere with Sinatra, but rather makes him shine by providing contrast to his relatively static melody note.

Example 2.3: String Reduction and Sinatra of mm. 9-11 of A1

The musical score for Example 2.3 consists of two staves. The top staff is a vocal line in treble clef with the lyrics: "deep in my heart_ that you're real - ly a part_ of me". The bottom staff is a string reduction in grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The dynamics are marked as *p* (piano) and *mp* (mezzo-piano). Chord symbols are placed below the vocal line: $E_b m^7$, $A_b 7(\#11)$, A_b^{13} , $D_b \text{maj} 7(\#11)$, and $D_b \text{maj} 7$. The string reduction shows a simple harmonic accompaniment with long notes and some ties.

Additionally, there is now respite from the bass clarinet line. The result is a new spacious and colorful room for Sinatra. He instinctively takes advantage of this freedom by first digging in to his line, but then slightly laying back on the last three words, thus creating a lazy, romantic take on the phrase (Lyrics 2.2). In the space after this phrase, Riddle introduces the trumpets in harmon mutes (Example 2.4) on top of the still-rising string pads. The voicings emphasize the bright #11 chord extension and contain several half-step rubs. The dissonance in these voicings contrasts with Sinatra's swooning quality and foreshadows the tumultuous path that the music is headed. They also add to the

general increase in intensity that takes place throughout the melody statement, while preparing the listener for the upcoming trombone stabs in A2.

Lyrics 2.2

So deep in my heart, that you're really a part of me

Example 2.4: Harmon-muted trumpet reduction at mm.11-12 of A1



For the recap of the last phrase in mm. 13-14, the strings drop to a lower register and the intensity momentarily ebbs, which creates space for Sinatra's foil, that persistent ostinato now played on the baritone sax, to return in mm.15-16. The interaction, balance, and interdependence of vocalist and arranger are in full force before A2 even begins.

Riddle never gives Sinatra an opportunity to fully relax with the constantly shifting intensity levels. A2 continues to build and uses a variety of orchestral techniques. The reed section is now fully converted to saxophones for more presence, and Sinatra enters with a distinctive edge that is infused with the anxiety of his internal battle (Lyric 2.4). This new tone is perfectly supported by a more aggressive and harder swinging orchestra. Throughout the first 8 measures of A2 the baritone sax ostinato continues, even through the shift to the minor tonality (Example 2.5). By persistently plowing through the harmonic shift this stubborn instrumental voice parallels the growing anguish of Porter's story (Lyrics 2.3).

Lyrics 2.3

I tried so not to give in

I said to myself this affair it never will go so well

Now there is the beginning of a sense of strife, with the trombones re-entering playing rhythmic stabs instead of the previous pads. Though they are still at a mezzo-piano dynamic, they are in a higher range, with some falls. The trombones in example 5 perfectly demonstrate how an arranger can play with expectations. They enter in m.1 and repeat two measures later in m.3. Another entrance at m.5 would be expected but Riddle simply leaves the space open here. Now it seems as if the riff has passed, but it enters again at m.7. The space created by the absence of the trombone figure in m.5 leaves the listener primed and gives Sinatra an opportunity to shine. He takes advantage by leaning into and then fading quickly off of the word “affair,” giving the perception of extra space for the listener to digest before completing the phrase. The last eight measures of A2 finish in a similar manner to A1 with romantic string pads now in a higher register, and the re-entry of the ostinato.

Example 2.5: mm.1-8 of A2

The musical score consists of three systems. The first system includes the vocal line for Sinatra, the Trombones part, and the Baritone sax part. The vocal line starts with a triplet of eighth notes. The lyrics are: "tried so not to give in I said". Chord symbols Ebm7 and Dbmaj9 are placed below the vocal line. The Baritone sax part is marked *mp*. The second system continues the vocal line with lyrics: "to my-self this af- fair ne-ver will go so well. But". Chord symbols Gbm6/Db, C/Db, and Dbmaj9 are placed below the vocal line. The Baritone sax part continues with a similar rhythmic pattern.

Riddle's intentions constantly remain true to his role in the collaboration with Sinatra. While Riddle's arrangement always allows Sinatra to have freedom of expression, it also infuses the background with colors that ultimately affect Sinatra's musical interpretation. There is a symbiotic relationship between the two men as Sinatra waits patiently to seize the special moments that are built into the arrangement.

Section 2: A3 and A4

This instrumental interlude serves to reframe the final vocal section, which is crucial since the arrangement at B2 is simply a more aggressive and denser repeat of B1, with the same lyrics. Riddle also uses this interlude to counterbalance the tough, commanding Sinatra. This thunderous band feature not only matches his larger than life personality, but it also challenges and propels Sinatra.

Often, an instrumental feature will simply follow the length and harmonic structure from the form, but A3 does not. Instead, it stays on the tonic for twelve measures rather than the sixteen measures of the ii/V/I progression from the first A section of “I’ve Got you Under my Skin.” This return to the home key and static motion erases the memory of what came before and primes the listener by creating a blank foundation on which to build. In addition, it references the notes in the original ostinato line without exactly copying it. The similar phrase and feel of the introduction ties the arrangement together. Again, Riddle plays with expectations by truncating the final two measures of B1 and abandoning the eight-bar phasing of the form. Instead he creates one twelve-bar phrase divided into three even groups. Each of these four-bar phrases adds a new voice at a higher dynamic marking, which increases the complexity, density, and intensity.⁵² Example 2.6 is the last of these phrases that includes all the trombones. In addition, the string section plays pads that ascend one octave for each phrase.

⁵² The collaborative effort includes all parties involved – the following example includes vocalist, arranger, performer, and a bandleader who was not even present. “At Sinatra’s request, Riddle had worked with bass trombonist George Roberts on the long, tension-building musical crescendo that leads up to the bridge. When asked if he knew any Afro-Cuban rhythmical patterns, Roberts had suggested lifting the opening trombone lines from Stan Kenton’s ‘23 Degrees North, 82 Degrees West’, resulting in the crescendo that leads up to Milt Bernhart’s red-hot trombone solo.” In the *Sinatra at the Sands* version

Example 2.6: mm.9-12 of A3

The musical score for Example 2.6, mm. 9-12 of A3, is written in 4/4 time with a key signature of three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat). It consists of four staves: Trombones 1,2; Trombone 3; Bass Trombone; and Upright Bass. The music is marked with dynamics *f* and *ff*, and includes crescendo hairpins. Trombones 1,2 and Trombone 3 play a melodic line with eighth notes and rests. The Bass Trombone plays a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The Upright Bass plays a walking bass line with quarter notes and eighth notes.

At this point the feverish energy can hardly be contained, and in the final measure of A3 the voiced trumpets enter with a chromatic, ascending triplet figure into the shout chorus of A4. They continue for eight bars, playing a punchy version of the melody in their higher register. Although the harmony is now the same as A2, the three-part counterpoint continues in the trombones, with the first trombone reserved for a wild, screaming solo by Milt Bernhart.⁵³ On top of this chaos, the sax section brings even more energy by underscoring everything with pads. The next six bars (mm. 9-12 of A4) follow the harmony by walking the bass over the chord changes and replacing the trombone counterpoint with a voiced, tutti, brass melody statement with an aggressive sax section counterline that is scored in octaves.

during this interlude, Sinatra warns the audience, “Run for cover. Run and hide!” Buskin, “Classic Tracks.”

⁵³ Sinatra’s quest for perfection ultimately led to 22 takes, which wore out Milt Bernhart, though he was somehow able to play this incredible solo.

Section 3: B2 Through the Ending

With such an impressive instrumental feature, it is possible to forget that Sinatra is standing by to finish the piece, and now he is forced to bring up the energy level at B2. Riddle uses various techniques to create a huge buildup throughout this section. In the first eight measures the rhythm section is already driving with the bass walking and drums playing a ride pattern. The strings are tacet and the tutti horns are playing a two-measure rhythmic phrase based on quarter notes in the first measure and then driving eighth notes into the next. With the brass in the stands and the pianissimo dynamic marking, they do not interfere with the melody,⁵⁴ but are constantly prodding and pushing the energy. Again, Riddle uses the tonic pedal point to create continuity throughout the arrangement and build tension. The horns are voiced over the harmony of the bridge but the bass trombone and bass now play low D flats. Sinatra now has freedom to bring his creative voice into the collaboration by taking advantage of this structured repetitive phrase and driving rhythm section. He takes great liberties with the phrasing, loosens up his rhythmic feel, and alters the lyric in m.7. With such a grounded support system, Sinatra can access his uncanny ability to casually tell the story while knowing that the listener will not get lost.

⁵⁴ It is notable that out of respect for the vocal line, Riddle does not write into the high range of the trumpets to create intensity. He is keenly aware of the balance of the instruments, particularly under the circumstances of the recording.

Example 2.7: Band reduction and Sinatra phrasing versus original at mm.1-8 of B2

The musical score is divided into two systems. The first system covers measures 1-4, and the second system covers measures 5-8.

System 1 (Measures 1-4):

- Porter's melody:** Treble clef, key signature of three flats. Lyrics: "sac-ri-fice an-y-thing come what might for the sake of ha-ving you near... in spite of a". A triplet of eighth notes is marked with a '3' above it.
- Sinatra:** Treble clef, same key signature. Lyrics: "sac-ri-fice an-y-thing come what might for the sake of ha-ving you near... in spite of a". A triplet of eighth notes is marked with a '3' above it.
- Sax Section:** Treble and Bass clefs, same key signature. Chords: Ebm7/Db, Ab7/Db, Db, Db7(b9). Dynamics: *pp* *cresc. poco a poco*. Includes the instruction "brass in stand".
- Brass:** Treble and Bass clefs, same key signature. Dynamics: *pp* *cresc. poco a poco*.

System 2 (Measures 5-8):

- Pno.:** Treble clef, same key signature. Lyrics: "war-ning voice that comes in the night and re-peats re-peats in my ear... don't you". A measure rest is shown above the staff.
- Sinatra:** Treble clef, same key signature. Lyrics: "war-ning voice that comes in the night and re-peats re-peats in my ear... don't you".
- Sax section:** Treble and Bass clefs, same key signature. Chords: Gbm6/Db, Gbm6/Db, Fm7, E9, Ebm7, Ab7. Dynamics: *f*. Includes the instruction "brass out of stand".
- Brass:** Treble and Bass clefs, same key signature. Dynamics: *ff*.

A huge change occurs in mm.7-8 that highlights the dynamic nature of the arrangement. The band finally abandons the pedal point by spreading the saxes to their low registers to double the voicings of the trombones, changing the rhythmic pattern, and taking the brass out of the stands. These two measures transition to a massive release with the entrance of the sustained strings and unison line in the sax section. Underpinning the Basie-style brass kicks⁵⁵ the rhythm section is continuing to drive the music more aggressively. Now, Riddle uses all his resources with the strings providing flow and romance against the heavy swinging figures of the brass and backbeat on the drumset. Sinatra is pushed into his finest form as he soars over the top of the music, peppers the lyrics with his own,⁵⁶ and uses more triplets to create a greater sense of flow.

Even with the high degree of intensity, Riddle remains sensitive to the vocalist and the lyric. The rhythmic density of the brass increases in the spaces after phrases (mm.11 and 15, Example 2.8). Sinatra is able to interact and play with the band such as mm.12-14. He inserts his own lyric, “step up,” to parallel “wake up,” and he effortlessly places them between the brass stabs, making it seem as if the band is actually reacting to him. At this point in B2, which did not start pianissimo, there has already been sixteen measures of steady dynamic growth and is already huge. In order to prepare for the final ascent, the sax section abandons the pads with the strings and joins the brass. Now, the saxes are in the lower midrange coupled with trumpets 3/4 and trombones 1/2, and the band is huge and solid with the support of the fundamental harmony. The baritone sax

⁵⁵ The coupling of the trumpet and trombone sections at the octave is a characteristic of many Basie charts and creates a powerful tight brass sound.

⁵⁶ In mm.12-13 he adds “why not” and “step up.”

grounds the band in its lowest register. Sinatra ascends to an Eb⁵⁷ and accentuates the lyric “but” to make his final statement. The strings in their higher register create intensity without drowning out the voice. The horns are now free to play in a register that adds warmth and fundamental support. The horns have two big hits in mm.17-18 on beats 1+ and 3. In m.17 Sinatra plays against these rhythms by stating downbeat quarter notes for “each time I” over the first syncopated hit, and then uses a quarter note triplet to float over the big pad on beat three. For the final lyric Sinatra starts on his highest note so far and descends via quarter note triplets to Porter’s original Ab on the final word “begin.” Riddle has already taken out the saxes to give time to pick up their doubles, and the brass give a final swell and punctuation in tandem with this word. The band remains tacet at m.20 to create a moment of reflection and allow for a massive drop in the level of intensity. Finally, the ending features a four-measure tag with the reintroduction of the ostinato from the introduction and a gentle final chord from the band.

⁵⁷ This note is much higher than the one written by Porter and is toward the top of Sinatra’s range.

Example 2.8: mm.9-18 of B2

9

Sinatra

know lit - tle fool_ you ne^ever can win_ altos and tenors why not use_ your men -

Saxophones

baritone

Brass

String section

13

Sinatra

ta - li - ty_ step up wake up to re - al - i - ty_ But_ each

Sax

Brass

Strings

17

Sinatra

time I do just the thought of you_ makes me stop just be - fore I be - gin_ Cause I've

Sax

To woodwind doubles

Brass

1. 1. Trombones to cup mutes

Strings

Both Sinatra and Riddle have a strong voice in their collaboration in “I’ve Got you Under my Skin.” Riddle has created an arrangement that simultaneously adheres to Sinatra’s explicit demands and stretches the creative boundaries of both men. The accompaniment is interesting and provides direction, but it always allows for freedom of interpretation for Sinatra. It is so well constructed and Sinatra is so sensitive that band and singer seem to react to and feed off each other’s energy in real time. Sinatra takes full advantage of the security and ideas, but is free to emphasize the lyrics and phrase in the way he wants. The arrangement captures the essence of Sinatra’s style and there is a sense that the arranger and vocalist are symbiotic.

CHAPTER 3

“I’VE GOT A CRUSH ON YOU”

George Gershwin composed “I’ve Got a Crush on You” in 1928, with lyrics by his brother Ira. This song was used in two Broadway musicals, *Treasure Girl* (1928) and *Strike up the Band* (1930). Ella Fitzgerald recorded this piece in 1959 as part of a songbook series produced by her manager Norman Granz for the Verve record label. Though the previous four sets focused on Cole Porter, Rodgers and Hart, Duke Ellington, and Irving Berlin, and three more were to follow, *Ella Fitzgerald Sings the George and Ira Gershwin Songbook* is often considered the most successful and “was Nelson Riddle and Ella Fitzgerald at their absolute best.”⁵⁸ “It was a monumental achievement, by far the most ambitious and comprehensive project of the series.”⁵⁹ On this project “Ella is constantly on fire ... [t]he ballads are crisply articulated with feeling ...” and her “interpretive skills were at peak maturity.”⁶⁰ Or to put in terms of a collaborative effort this album “was unquestionably the foremost combination of vocalist, composer, lyricist, and arranger in the recorded history of popular music.”⁶¹

Granz was not able to get Riddle for the first of the songbook series but wanted him so much that the arranger Buddy Bregman “tried to write the charts in a Riddle vein, by copying Nelson’s approach note for note.”⁶² The collaboration between Fitzgerald and Riddle was smooth and easy. They had a fantastic rapport and her presence was able to

⁵⁸ Levinson, *September*, 191.

⁵⁹ David, “Fitzgerald,” 125.

⁶⁰ David, “Fitzgerald,” 125-126.

⁶¹ Levinson, *September*, 191.

⁶² Levinson, *September*, 190.

elicit rare smiles and laughter from Riddle in the studio.⁶³ “There was no creative tug-of-war, no conflict of egos”⁶⁴ between the two. Fitzgerald was very much in charge of how she would interpret the music even though she was “the most modest of anyone in the room.”⁶⁵ But since she had great respect for Riddle, she would happily listen to him and implement suggestions, though there was rarely any need. According to guitarist Herb Ellis, who played on the session, “Nelson knew precisely how [Fitzgerald] sang and what she needed in her accompaniment. He was also aware of what she didn’t need... he made it possible for her to be the star that she was.”⁶⁶

A singer of Fitzgerald’s caliber does not need much accompaniment, if any, to sound great. Her beautiful, pure voice does not have the weight of tone and emotional bravado of a singer like Sinatra, and it is crucial that the arrangements do not interfere with or distract from the melody and her vocal quality. “Nelson knew how to back up artists and make them sound great without interfering with their singing.”⁶⁷ Riddle’s wide range and sensitivity enables him to create a mood in his accompaniment that matches and even prods Sinatra, and a completely different mood that delicately supports Fitzgerald singing a romantic ballad. With a vocalist like Fitzgerald it is especially important to know “where to bring the orchestra in, [and] where not to.”⁶⁸ The relatively sparse texture of Riddle’s “I’ve Got a Crush on You” leaves ample freedom for Fitzgerald to simply float over the top of the orchestra, interpreting the melody as she

⁶³ Levinson, *September*, 194.

⁶⁴ David, “Fitzgerald,” 125.

⁶⁵ David, “Fitzgerald,” 125.

⁶⁶ Levinson, *September*, 193.

⁶⁷ Friedwald, *Sinatra!*, 207.

⁶⁸ Friedwald, *Sinatra!*, 207.

wishes. But what he does write always supports the melody; creates a cohesive, unified piece; sets the mood; and adds interest in key moments.

The form of “I’ve Got a Crush on You” is ABAC. These 8 mm. sections are preceded by a 16 mm. verse. Since this is a ballad with a fairly static intensity range, I will not create a dynamic contour chart as I did for “I’ve Got you Under my Skin.” Furthermore, this arrangement exactly follows the form throughout the two choruses. I refer to the form in the following manner:

Verse (16), A, B1, A1, C, A2, B2, A3, C1, Ending (2)

The verse itself is four sections of 4 mm. each in the form AA’BA’’. It is performed in the typical rubato style of many verses. The arrangement for the verse perfectly captures the mood of love and creates a dreamy atmosphere that complements Fitzgerald’s timbre and interpretation. Furthermore, it is organized and cohesive, and subtle variations in orchestration occur to create interest and momentum. Finally, the verse introduces motives that recur throughout the arrangement that serve to tie together the entire piece. An examination of the first four measures reveals the care and thoughtfulness Riddle had for every detail.

Example 3.1: Mm.1-4 of the Verse

The musical score consists of three staves. The top staff is for the vocal line, labeled 'Fitzgerald', and includes the lyrics: 'How glad the ma-ny mil-lions of Tim-o-thys and Wil-liams would be to cap-ture me But'. The middle staff is for the Celeste/Harp, with a 'Harp' marking and a dynamic of 'mp'. The bottom staff is for the Strings, with a 'with mute' marking and a dynamic of 'p'.

Riddle’s role in the collaboration with Fitzgerald is to support and spotlight her. His attention to orchestration allows him to create accompaniment that lets the vocalist shine.⁶⁹ He uses the harp to produce a light, dreamy sound that does not distract from Ella’s sweet timbre. The harp is in its upper-middle register so that most of the notes fall above the vocal line, and add sparkle to the voice. In this way, Fitzgerald’s voice is not only the melody, but it is also the grounding force in the music and demands the listener’s attention. The predominance of perfect fourths in the voicings and diatonic planing over the tonic create lightness while accentuating the fantastical, playful nature of the lyrics. Finally, the first three top notes are the same and echo and reinforce the first three notes of the verse, excluding the pickup. Riddle takes advantage of the held note in the melody

⁶⁹ “The strength of the various sounds in the orchestra have to be calculated carefully so that the important instruments stand out, and are not obscured by other instruments playing at the same time.” Riddle, *Arranged*, 164.

to bring in the strings at m.3. Their quick harmonic movement⁷⁰ grounds the music for one measure, but they quickly turn back to the previous dreamy mood by using identical voicings that were used by the harp in order to diatonically plane.

Like his work with Sinatra in “I’ve Got you Under my Skin,” Riddle’s arrangement for Fitzgerald creates a sense of collaboration during performance. Even in the context of a ballad he manages to create a dialogue between Fitzgerald and the orchestra. The first two notes of the strings at m.3 smoothly answer the lyrics “would be,” as they are the inverse of that melody. This response sets up the next phrase “to capture me,” but now the strings do not directly respond but rather create a bridge into the next section that closely parallels the first. Now there is a subtle change in orchestration with the celeste fulfilling the previous role of the harp, which generates interest and development. Finally, Riddle introduces material in the string section in m.4 that forms a recurring theme of a pattern consisting consist of groups of two ascending and then two descending eighth-notes. This motif occurs in various forms throughout the arrangement as seen in example 3.2. This familiar landmark gives the piece a sense of cohesion.

⁷⁰ The strings play a vi, ii, V progression in Db major.

Example 3.2: Some occurrences of the theme presented in m.4 of the verse

The image displays two staves of musical notation. The top staff is a single melodic line in 4/4 time, featuring a key signature of three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat). It is annotated with three sections: 'top note of strings m. 8 of verse' (measures 1-2), 'top note of strings m. 10 of verse' (measures 3-4), and 'celli in m. 15-16 of verse' (measures 5-6). The bottom staff is a piano accompaniment in the same key and time signature, annotated with 'violins m. 8 of A' (measures 1-2) and 'basic pattern of violins and cello in mm. 1-4 of A1' (measures 3-6). The piano part shows a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes in the right hand and a more active bass line in the left hand.

Riddle’s always creates an appropriate context for the lyrical content, which forms a strong a point of connection with the vocalist. In the first phrase of the verse the lyrics are hypothetical; in the second they are describing the past actions the suitor took; but in the third phrase (B section of the verse) the narrative switches to first person, present tense (Lyrics 3.1). Now, Riddle uses the strings instead of the celeste/harp to reflect the change in harmonic, melodic and more direct lyrical content. This new content grounds the harmony, thereby giving Fitzgerald more freedom to move at her own pace without losing the listener (Example 3.3). She takes advantage by surging forward in mm.9-10, and then slowing so much that in m.12 the strings move to beats 2 and 3 ahead of the words. In the last phrase, the harp and celeste play the diatonic chords before the last two measures of the verse where Riddle again answers the lyrics “when you” and “came into view” with a simple ascending phrase (Example 3.4). This phrase accentuates

the open cadence that sets up the chorus. Here the eighth note cello pattern enters to form the basis of accompaniment in A1 and A3.

Lyrics 3.1 (Truncated lyrics of the verse)

*How glad the many millions of Timothy's and William's would be...
But you had such persistence, you wore down my resistance...
You're my big and brave and handsome Romeo...
It's not that you're attractive, but oh my heart grew active...*

Example 3.3: Strings from mm.9-12 of the verse

The musical score for Example 3.3 consists of a vocal line and a string accompaniment. The vocal line is in a treble clef with a key signature of three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and a common time signature. The lyrics are: "You're my big and brave and hand-some Ro-me-o. How I won you I shal nev-er,nev-er know. It's". The string accompaniment is in a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) with the same key signature and time signature. It features a prominent eighth-note cello pattern in the bass line. Dynamics markings include *mp* (mezzo-piano) and *p* (piano).

Example 3.4: Mm. 13-16 of the verse

The musical score for Example 3.4 consists of a vocal line and a string accompaniment. The vocal line is in a treble clef with a key signature of three flats and a common time signature. The lyrics are: "not that you're at-trac-tive but oh my heart grew ac-tive when you came in-to view I've got a". The string accompaniment is in a grand staff with the same key signature and time signature. It features a Harp and Celeste section in the upper register, marked *mp*. The lower register shows a cello pattern with glissando markings (*gliss.*) in the final measures.

Riddle is aware of his role in the collaboration as the piece enters the main body of the form. It remains straightforward and unobtrusive with the rhythm section playing a basic ballad two-feel, and the guitar and piano gently comping from chord symbols. The piano is instructed to play light fills, and the only dynamic mark is a pianissimo while the sustained strings play pads and slow moving countermelodies. Though Riddle makes it look easy, it takes extreme skill and sensitivity to write accompaniment that is supportive and interesting while always complementing the delicate vocal line.

The most critical part is the top voice of the section, as this is what the listener hears as the melody. In example 3.5 Riddle accentuates the nature of falling in love as an emotional surge. The ascending line in the top voice of the strings matches the lyrics by increasing the passion as the lyrics approach the word “emotion.” This ascent also provides an ironic contrast with the melody, which simultaneously falls to the word “fall.” This multipurpose countermelody never challenges the voice, as it is in a higher register and is comprised of notes that are either the same notes as the melody or that harmonize with the melody.⁷¹ Finally, the basic half and quarter notes form pads that once again give Fitzgerald freedom to float. Riddle saves any faster subdivisions for the last measure, which references the four-note motif that was introduced in the verse. This resulting accompaniment is simultaneously dramatic and discreet.

⁷¹ Most of the harmony is comprised of thirds and sixths.

Example 3.5: Strings and voice reduction of mm.5-8 of A

The image shows a musical score for voice and strings. The voice part is on a single staff in a treble clef, with lyrics underneath. The lyrics are: "ne - ver had the least no-tion that I could fall with so much e - mo-tion". There are three triplet markings over the notes. The strings part consists of two staves, treble and bass clef, showing chordal accompaniment. The key signature has three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and the time signature is 4/4. The strings play a series of chords, with some tremolo markings in the final measure.

Every part of Riddle's arrangements including the instrumental sections is in service of his collaboration with the vocalist. Here the light interlude (A2 and B2) offers a break from the voice and delicately restates the melody with nothing that might challenge Fitzgerald. Riddle changes the texture by removing the rhythm section, reintroducing the harp with a pulsing pedal point, having the strings play tremolo (A2), and having the first violin play the melody two octaves higher than Fitzgerald. Without the rhythm section and with the tremolo strings, the music floats with less definitive time that conveys a dreamy sense. The bass pickup on beat 3 of m.8 of B2 creates a tie to the full rhythm section and Fitzgerald's reentry at A3.

Riddle uses a standard tag with a few dramatic devices to create a riveting ending that accentuates the voice. For the first time in the arrangement, the accompaniment uses an altered seventh chord, as the harmony moves to the VI to set up the tag. By saving this more biting color for the end, the tag has more impetus and demands attention. Riddle also gives the orchestra a full three beats to project this sonority, which gives Fitzgerald flexibility to phrase as she wishes. She is perfectly attuned to the moment, as she

particularly lays into the corresponding lyric “yes”⁷² and seems to float forever before moving into the last phrase. Still, two more harmonic devices remain. On the Abmin7 chord⁷³ Fitzgerald once again takes advantage of the freedom in her accompaniment by staying a while on the first syllable of “baby.” This particular note, a B natural, is not the original melody, but matches the harmony and gives a wider and more dramatic ascent to the second syllable. In the final phrase, Riddle delays the gratification of the resolving tonic chord with a rest on beat one followed by the Neapolitan on beat two. The final string voicing is a Db2 in the low register, which creates a warm and gentle pad to support the sustaining melody note. The harp and celeste bring back the dreaminess with their last contribution of unison quartal-voicings of a Db6/9 chord.

Example 3.6: M.8 of C1 plus the 2 mm. tag

The musical score consists of two staves. The top staff is for the voice, with lyrics: "you yes, I've got a crush my ba-by on you." The bottom staff is for strings, with chords: Db, Bb7(9/13), Eb9, Abmi7, Ab13, D6, and Db(add2). Dynamics include *mp* and *p*, and glissando markings are present.

The light texture of this arrangement allows Fitzgerald freedom to interpret the melody. The choices of orchestration and register always support and accentuate certain

⁷² It is interesting that perhaps the most beautiful note of the piece is not in the original lyric.

⁷³ This chord functions as a suspension into the Ab13.

qualities of the lyrics and the sweet vocal timbre. There is no challenging or prodding Fitzgerald as there was with Sinatra, and no tension in the arrangement. Not only does this reflect the nature of a whimsical love-song versus an ambiguously erotic, obsessive love-song medium swing tune, but it also reflects the difference in the personal relationship between arranger and singer in the different settings. Each arrangement necessarily embodies the work produced for a heavy-handed perfectionist controlling Sinatra and the demure Fitzgerald, who seemed to bring out the warmest side of Riddle.

Summary of Riddle's Approach to Both Arrangements

Effective collaborations take place when there is sensitivity in both parties. During their performances, Sinatra and Fitzgerald both demonstrate sensitivity and reactivity to the accompaniment. And Riddle's contrasting approach to the two different vocalists clearly demonstrates his sensitivity. "One indefinable yet important skill to acquire is the subtle change of approach needed to cope with a variety of singers and their varied personalities."⁷⁴ The differences in approach also reflect the differences between the compositions and styles of music. The fact that the same arranger produced such different music is indicative of the unique nature of each individual collaborative effort, and is also a testament to the arranger's flexibility, humility, and creativity. However, in spite of the differences, these arrangements also share an intentionality and clarity of ideas⁷⁵ that underlie Riddle's approach to the collaboration with these vocalists. Both arrangements have an integrity that would make them pleasant to listen to on their own, while also remaining sensitive to the unique characteristics of the vocalists, composition,

⁷⁴ Riddle, *Arranged*, 177.

⁷⁵ "A very important element in conveying ideas is clarity." Riddle, *Arranged*, 164.

style, and lyrics. Above all, these arrangements give the singers ample freedom to create their own interpretations of the music.

This chart is aligned by specific musical considerations and shows the similarities and differences between the two pieces:

Example 3.7: Comparison Chart

Arrangement	“I’ve Got you Under my Skin”	“I’ve Got a Crush on You”
Form	Alteration of the form	Strict adherence to the form
Introduction	Use of the introduction to set a mood that fits the lyrical content and style	Use of the introduction (in this case the verse) to set a mood that fits the lyrical content and style
Intensity	Wide intensity range created by different orchestration, consideration of range of the instruments, voicings, and dynamic markings	Narrow range of intensity level
Orchestration	Frequently shifting and additive orchestration techniques	Fairly consistent use of orchestration with the significant lack of rhythm section during the verse and instrumental interlude
Motives	Presentation of motives in the introduction that are present throughout the entire arrangement	Presentation of motives in the introduction that are present throughout the entire arrangement
Voicings	Use of specific chord-voicings to create mood that reflects the lyrics	Use of specific chord-voicings to create a mood that reflects the lyrics
Interlude	Use of a complex and powerful interlude to match Sinatra’s energy and set up his reentry	Use of a delicate, dreamy interlude to restate the melody, and avoids overshadowing Fitzgerald by choices of orchestration, tempo, and register
Sustained Strings	Sustained strings in contrast with or underneath the typical big band rhythmic figures	Sustained strings provide warm pads underneath the melody
Background figures	Background figures are more active in the spaces between the phrases of the melody	More active figures in strings between phrases
Counter melodies	Counter melodies that do not interfere with and complement the melody	Counter melodies in strings do not interfere with and complement the melody
Ending	Brief, gentle ending contrasts with the wild musical presentation	A slight burst of intensity sets up the tag at the end, which is drawn out with delayed resolutions

CHAPTER 4

“SHAKE DOWN THE STARS”

Kate McGarry has a successful career as a jazz vocalist. She has six critically acclaimed CDs and a Grammy nomination for Best Jazz Vocal CD. She has extensive media coverage⁷⁶ and is a member of the vocal collective MOSS. She has performed at Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, Birdland, the Newport Jazz Festival, Berlin Jazz Fest and Jazz Baltica.

In 2014 the Cape Symphony Orchestra in Cape Cod invited McGarry to perform at their Barnstable 375 celebration. She agreed to sing the traditional Irish folksong, “Danny Boy,” but was not content with the existing orchestral arrangement as it was melodramatic and bombastic. McGarry is not one to push the music into the listener’s face. Rather, her subtle presentation of the music commands attention with its depth of emotion, lyricism, sincerity, and deep groove. Like Nina Simone, McGarry has a wide range of influences from folk to jazz, pop, and blues. These contrasts allow her to transcend the typical boundaries of the jazz genre and create a unique sound.

Knowing that she was looking for a new arrangement of “Danny Boy” that would better fit her approach, I suggested creating one. Since this basic folk song is based on only a few chords, I felt that my first task was to create a more complex harmonic structure that would provide interest. I sent her an audio version of the first draft and she responded that it was sweet and lovely. “If this is the direction you feel is right for you I will sing the heck out of it, BUT if it’s ok for me to be more specific with what I want, I

⁷⁶ Some of her media coverage includes an interview on “All Things Considered,” a performance on “Jazz Set with DeeDee Bridgwater,” and “Piano Jazz with Marian McPartland.”

will share what I'm thinking about this from a more practical light and then we go forward from there." At this point she gave me extremely specific feedback including keeping the chords in a "folky/pop guitar way" such as "going to the minor chord on the bridge in Bar 9." "I won't be syncing the melody up beat for beat with the chords, so less chords would leave me more freedom rhythmically to phrase the lyric. Is there a different way to get a little drama ... into the piece than with the passing chords?" McGarry is truly one of the kindest people I know and yet she is not afraid to make her vision clear. I decided to save my re-harmonized version of "Danny Boy" for another time and did my job as a collaborator to match her concept, flatter her singing, and do something musically satisfying for myself. I responded with "I tried really hard to preserve the delicate nature and folksiness of Danny Boy while at the same time giving a bit of fun to the orchestra." After a few more drafts and suggestions, we ended up with an arrangement that was pleasing to both of us. It also was well received by the conductor and the audience.

The songwriting team Jimmy Van Heusen and Eddie DeLange wrote "Shake Down the Stars" in 1940. Considered one of the great American songwriters, Van Heusen's music tends to be "sophisticated, with chromatic bass lines and melodies built up sequentially through successions of diminished chords."⁷⁷ "Shake Down the Stars" has been recorded by several of the greatest jazz vocalists including Frank Sinatra, Ella Fitzgerald, Bing Crosby, Dinah Shore, Adelaide Hall and big bands such as Glenn Miller, Benny Goodman, and Tommy Dorsey.

⁷⁷ Deane L. Root, "Van Heusen, Jimmy," *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/29008>.

McGarry suggested this piece for the recital and sent a link⁷⁸ to a version recorded by Sarah Vaughan with the Harold Mooney Orchestra as a reference. In addition, she gave me a lead sheet containing only chord symbols and requested that I use only basic harmony. At my request, she made a recording of herself singing the coda, since the melody was not on the lead sheet. McGarry was pleased with my suggestion of an arrangement modeled after the Riddle/Sinatra version of “I’ve Got you Under my Skin.” I transcribed the melody and chords from the Vaughan clip, and put it into the key of E major as she requested. When she saw the lead sheet with all of the sharps on the chord symbols, she decided that it would be easier to go with a more conventional key for jazz and lowered the key to Eb. I let her know that we could easily do the arrangement in E, but concurred that it would be more easily playable for the band in Eb, and sent her a new lead sheet in Eb, including her coda.

“Shake Down the Stars” has an AABA form comprised of eight-bar phrases. Though the A sections ultimately resolve to the Eb major tonic, they begin in a darker tonality with 2 mm. that contain a minor iib5/V that resolves to the V/V of the key (Example 4.1). These chords reflect the subject and setting of the piece – unrequited love at nighttime. The specific story is about a rejected lover who finds him/herself alone wanting to remove and even destroy anything romantic, from stars to streams to roses (Lyrics 4.1). Though the lyrics tell as story of despair, they are so extreme as to seem somewhat facetious. Furthermore, besides the tonality of the first two measures of each A section, the music has a fairly standard progression that would equally support a more joyful topic.

⁷⁸ Sarah Vaughan with the Harold Mooney Orchestra, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wAEEyEiY9Z4>

Example 4.1: First A section of “Shake Down the Stars”

Chord symbols: Gm7(b5), C7, Gm7(b5), C7, F13, Gb7 F7, Fmi7, Abmi(ma7), Gmi7, C7(b9), Fmi7, Bb7, Eb6, Bb7.

Lyrics 4.1 (Truncated lyrics):

*Shake down the stars, pull down the clouds, turn off the moon...
 Dry up the streams, stop all my dreams, cut off the breeze...
 I never thought I'd cry about you, shake down the stars.
 I gave you my arms, my lips, my heart, my love, my life, my all...
 Crush every rose...
 I know I cannot live without you, shake down the stars.*

For the purpose of analysis I will refer to the form as:

Intro, A (11), A1, B, A2, AABA, Interlude (12), A3, A4, B1, A5 (6), Ending (13)

All phrases are 8 mm. unless otherwise indicated. This arrangement uses both the general concepts and specific techniques of Riddle. The sections of the form are not always kept as their original lengths, there is an interlude based on a contrapuntal trombone figure that serves to increase the intensity into the shout chorus (A3, A4), and there is a variety of intensity levels created by constant subtle variations of orchestration and dynamic markings. In general the intensity slowly rises throughout the different sections. And like “I’ve Got you Under my Skin,” there are two versions of the same bridge arrangement (B, B1) with the second being a more heavily orchestrated version of

the first. Furthermore, the general format of big band exchanging phrases with sustained strings is also present. Due to the different song form, lyrical content, performance venue and vocalist there are also several differences. The shorter form and recital format allows for three times through the complete form instead of only two. The ostinato in the introduction is a darker tonality than “I’ve Got you Under my Skin” to match the harmony of the A sections. Instead of a short ending, the ending is extended and with the piece ending on a high degree of intensity due to the nature of McGarry’s composed coda.

As evidenced by the previous analyses and his comments, Riddle was fond of using material throughout the arrangement that is presented in the introduction in order to produce a cohesive arrangement. This material can also act as a foil that counterbalances the vocalist. The introduction to “Shake Down the Stars” presents material that is referenced several times throughout the arrangement. The ostinato played by the bass clarinet is based on the minor ii/V of the A sections. This exact line appears at the beginning of A, A1, A3, and A5. An Eb Mixolydian bluesy variation of it appears as a brief four-measure interlude between A and A1, and once again during the main interlude. Finally, a similar line moves over the chord changes to the coda (Example 4.2).

Example 4.2: Three ostinato patterns used in the arrangement

Ostinato from Introduction



Ostinato from Interlude



Ostinato from the Ending



The image displays three musical staves, each representing a different ostinato pattern. Each staff begins with a bass clef and a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The first staff, 'Ostinato from Introduction', shows a sequence of eighth and quarter notes with some rests. The second staff, 'Ostinato from Interlude', features a more complex rhythmic pattern with eighth notes and rests. The third staff, 'Ostinato from the Ending', consists of a series of eighth notes with occasional rests. All staves end with a double bar line.

Another technique taken from Riddle is the use of the repetitive band figures on the bridge (example 4.3). This pattern played by the band increases the intensity. Because it uses three downbeat hits followed by ample space in each of the four-bar phrases, it provides a solid foundation so that the vocalist can freely phrase. In addition, the band has a more active figure on m.4 when there is space between the phrases. This example also demonstrates the constant shifting orchestration as the hits move from the trombone section into the saxes and trumpets at the halfway point.

Example 4.3: Reduction of B

Chord symbols for the first system: B \flat mi7, E \flat 7, A \flat maj7, A \circ 7, B \flat mi7, B \circ , A \flat maj7.

Chord symbols for the second system: Cmi9, F \flat alt., B \flat maj7, G \flat alt., Cmi7, F7, B \flat 7.

This arrangement takes into account McGarry’s abilities as a strong improviser. The style demands an accurate melody statement and the repetitive ostinato alternating with the strings in A, A1, B, A2 provides interest during the initial melody. But in the next section, AABA, McGarry has opportunity to truly put her own spin on the melody with the rhythm section in four and the horns and strings playing sparse hits and pads. In the vocal part the instruction is to “solo or reprise the melody,” which allows great freedom of interpretation. Later in A3 and A4, there is another solo opportunity in the form of trading with the band. For the ending, I transcribed McGarry’s version and created hits in the band to match her phrasing.

Example 4.4: Ending

The musical score is divided into three systems, each with four staves: Kate (Vocal), Saxes (Saxophone), Brass (Trumpet/Trombone), and U. Bass (Upright Bass). The key signature is three flats (B-flat major/D minor).

System 1:

- Chords:** Am^{7(b5)}, A^bmi⁷, Gmi⁷, C⁷, Am^{7(b5)}, A^bmi⁷, Gmi⁷, C⁷.
- Lyrics:** shake down the stars pull down the clouds turn of the moon do it soon
- Dynamic markings:** *p* (piano) for Saxes and Brass; *p* for U. Bass; *mp* (mezzo-piano) for U. Bass at the end.

System 2:

- Chords:** Am^{7(b5)}, A^bmi⁷, Gmi⁷, C⁷, Am^{7(b5)}, A^bmi⁷, B^{7(#9)}, C^{7(#9)}.
- Lyrics:** dry up the streams stop all my dreams shut off the breeze do it please
- Dynamic markings:** *mp* (mezzo-piano) for Saxes and Brass; *mf* (mezzo-forte) for Brass.

System 3:

- Chords:** Am^{7(b5)}, A^b7, Gmi⁷, C⁷, Am^{7(b5)}, A^b7, Gmi⁷, G⁷(maj7)(#11).
- Lyrics:** crush eve-ry rose hush eve-ry prayer break eve-ry vow_ do it do it do it now!
- Dynamic markings:** *mf* (mezzo-forte) for Saxes and U. Bass; *f* (forte) for Saxes and Brass.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The dynamics at play between musicians who collaborate on a performance from the production through the performance are infinitely complex, and it is impossible to tease out the individual contributions. The particular collaboration between an arranger and vocalist is by its nature unbalanced with one party normally having more say in the direction of the project. Though there are certainly cases where a well-known composer and arranger will hire a vocalist to bring the music to life, in most cases it is the vocalist who is the star, and has the ultimate say in the musical decisions. On the other hand, each party comes with his or her own particular skill-set, and in most cases the majority of the more detailed and technical musical decisions often rest with the arranger. Regardless of who is making the decisions, the arranger has at least three goals if she wants to increase her reputation and get more work: to meet the vocalist's demands, to create an arrangement that works well with the vocalist, and to satisfy her own artistic standards.

Meeting the vocalist's demands can be tricky, as she may not know exactly what she wants, or may not be able to clearly communicate her desires. Furthermore, attempting to put musical concepts in words is already problematic. The arranger must carefully listen to the explicit requests, and ask follow up questions or present examples to the vocalist in order to confirm that they meet the expectations. But the arranger must also consider other factors related to the general personality of the singer and remember to be respectful. When the arranger is sensitive to the artist it has a “decided beneficial effect on the singer – arranger relationship.”⁷⁹ The arranger must understand what is

⁷⁹ Riddle, *Arranged*, 178.

driving the vocalist at a deep emotional level to produce the best work. “One must understand a little of human nature in order to work effectively with that strong breed called ‘singers.’ I should first mention that they are all egotists, though in varying degrees.”⁸⁰ Furthermore, the arranger must consider the musical qualities of the vocalist such as phrasing, timbre, range, and interpretation of the lyrics. “A study, whether deliberate or by instinct, of the ‘feel’ of a singer is most important and helps whatever musical efforts are exerted to achieve their full fruition.”⁸¹ Finally, the arranger must take into account the myriad of practical limitations such as recording space, instruments, level of the musicians, and budget.

The art of collaboration lies in learning to working within these constraints, and the creativity arises at the “balance between structure and freedom.”⁸² Riddle makes an art of working freely within the structure, which is evident in his comments about working with singers and in the music itself. He serves his role as an arranger for a star, while at the same time evening the playing field by contributing uninhibited musical accompaniment. The arranger can gain inspiration from the vocalist. When working with Sinatra, Riddle sees his collaboration as an opportunity to “indulge [himself] in flights of neo-classical imagery.”⁸³ His collaboration with these vocalists inspires him to new levels of creativity.

In his discussion of jazz improvisation, Berliner states the competing concepts that “all musicians should have the freedom to express themselves” and “that players are mutually interdependent and should limit their individual freedom for the good of the

⁸⁰ Riddle, *Arranged*, 178.

⁸¹ Riddle, *Arranged*, 178.

⁸² Sawyer, “Learning Music,” 51.

⁸³ Riddle, *Arranged*, 179.

group.”⁸⁴ The possibilities of an arrangement are so vast that limiting freedom is not necessarily constraining. Within the layers of subtlety in the music lie infinite possibilities. In his arrangements with Sinatra and Fitzgerald, Nelson Riddle demonstrates that in spite of the limitations that arise between the parties in a collaborative effort, the beauty is finding the shared process to make a creative, unified product.

⁸⁴ Paul Berliner, *Thinking in Jazz: the Infinite Art of Improvisation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 417.

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