

THE JAZZ SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

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AKNOWLEDGEMENT

This work is about the process of composing and orchestrating original songs, as well as arranging already composed pieces, for an ensemble that I'm going to call from now on *Jazz Symphony Orchestra*, which is composed by a classical ensemble¹ plus a jazz big band. Regarding this type of orchestra my reference will be the *Metropole Orchestra* of the Netherlands. The overall concept is to write, produce and record a complete concert for a jazz guitar trio/quartet plus the orchestra.

¹ For "classical" ensemble I refer to the symphony music of the late classical music period, precisely to the first Viennese School type of orchestra.

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The Concept

As a musicologist I always been curious about the function of the orchestras related to the type of music they where playing along different periods in history. Studying jazz music brought me inside the broad world of improvisation, a place that seems to be so far from an orchestra written arrangement, where no much space is left to creativity.

So I start to think about the relation between an orchestra and the improvisational component, especially how much an “orchestral” thinking can limit this peculiar element that distinguish jazz from other music styles.

To do this I'm going to use as reference "Jazz Para El Autismo", a concert that I recently written for jazz symphony orchestra plus the jazz trio that I'm leading, the *Joe Midnights Space Trio*.

Working on this project I start to think about the possible ways for the trio to be free from the orchestra written score, rhythmically independent, but at the same time to be enriched by the infinite musical and timbrical possibilities that a big ensemble might bring.

Ideally I wanted to have an orchestra able to follow the band along the songs, as could be a single musician. To do this I have to rethink and improve some aspects about jazz orchestral thinking, from a writing point of view, to a more broad “concept” point of view.

Aware of the fact that this concept has its limitations, I'm going to explain in the next pages the approach I used to achieve this goal.

Jazz Para El Autismo

Jazz Para El Autismo is a charity event created by Felipe Saalfeld, Jacopo Mezzanotti and Jordi Ardit for the association *Musica Para El Autismo*².

It took place the 26th of May 2015 in the theatre “La Rambleta”, Valencia, Spain. The event consists of a music concert for a symphony jazz orchestra plus the Joe Midnights Space Trio³, and special guests: Daniel Marín (vibraphone), Polo Ortí (piano) and Carmen Woodruff (voice).

I personally wrote the entire concert for this occasion, composing new songs and orchestrating old ones from my repertoire, for a total of fifty-eight minutes of written music. Furthermore I’ve been responsible for the entire artistic direction, and part of the production.

The 98% of the revenue from the ticketing has been donated to the association, to fund music therapies for autistic kids, with families that do not have economical possibilities. The event has been a success and had a big impact on the local music scene; the theatre was full for 96% (623 people) and the local newspapers talked about this for a week, since was one of the biggest jazz events ever organized in Valencia.

² *Musica Para El Autismo* is an ONG funded in 2013 in Valencia. The main goal of this association is to fund therapies for kids with autism, organizing music related events. For more informations: *official website*, <http://musicaparaelautismo.org/>

³ Trio funded by Jacopo Mezzanotti in 2012. Musicians: Jacopo Mezzanotti (guitar), Alessio Bruno (double bass), Marcello Spagnolo (drums).

References From The Past

In this section I'm going to give an historical overview about some of the most important composer and arranger that influenced my jazz orchestral thinking, from the late New Orleans jazz, when the orchestras where used as a rhythm section, trough the “swing era” when larger ensembles enriched the possibilities for orchestration⁴ until today concept of orchestras, used to support the emotional path of a song.

Since this part could be very long and subject to a completely different research, I'm going to cite only some of the composer and arranger lives path, that I found more relevant for the purpose that I am going to develop in this research.

⁴ Paul F. Berliner, *Thinking in Jazz*, (Chiacago, University of Chicago Press), 291.

Paul Whiteman

Paul Samuel Whiteman (March 28, 1890 – December 29, 1967) was an American bandleader, composer and orchestral director.

Leader of one of the most popular dance bands in the United States during the 1920s and 1930s, Whiteman produced recordings that were immensely successful, and press notices often referred to him as the "King of Jazz". Using a large ensemble and exploring many styles of music, Whiteman is perhaps best known for his blending of symphonic music and jazz, as typified by his 1924 commissioning and debut of George Gershwin's jazz-influenced "Rhapsody in Blue"⁵. During his career, Whiteman recorded jazz and pop standards, some of them: "Mississippi Mud", "Rhapsody in Blue", "Wonderful One", "Hot Lips", "Mississippi Suite", and "Wang Wang Blues".

Fletcher Henderson

Fletcher Henderson was born in Georgia in 1898. He studied classical music with his mother before moving to New York City to look for work as a chemist⁶. He ended up becoming a pianist for Black Swan records before embarking on a career as a bandleader. Henderson's band helped create the swing era sound, but it was Benny Goodman's use of Henderson's arrangements that made swing a popular success. With the Fletcher Henderson Orchestra, he became the leader of his own band. The group's music director was Don Redman, whose arrangements featured a call and

⁵ Red hot jazz webpage, "Paul Whiteman", accessed June 30 2015, <http://www.redhotjazz.com/whiteman.html>.

⁶ Leonard Feather and Ira Gitler, *the Biographical Encyclopedia of Jazz* (New York, Oxford University Press), 311.

response between different sections of the band, a style that would come to define the big band sound. In 1924, the orchestra landed a regular gig at New York City's Roseland Ballroom⁷. That same year, Henderson hired Louis Armstrong to join the group.

Henderson and his band were a success at the Roseland, where they would stay for a decade. They also made recordings; their first hit was a reworked "Dippermouth Blues." Though Armstrong left the band in 1925, he had bequeathed a new jazz sound to the group. Although he led what was often a great band, Henderson's main legacy to jazz is his work as an arranger⁸.

George Gershwin

George Gershwin was born Jacob Gershowitz on September 26, 1898, in Brooklyn, New York⁹.

He started his studies with the piano teacher Charles Hambitzer and after dropping out of school at age 15, Gershwin played in several New York nightclubs and began his stint as a song-plugger in New York's Tin Pan Alley.

After three years of pounding out tunes on the piano for demanding customers, he had transformed into a highly skilled composer. To earn extra money, he also worked as a rehearsal pianist for Broadway singers. In 1916, he composed his first published song, "When You Want 'Em, You Can't Get 'Em; when You Have 'Em, You Don't Want 'Em".

⁷ "Fletcher Henderson", *The Biography.com website*, accessed Jun 25, 2015, <http://www.biography.com/people/fletcher-henderson-9334611>.

⁸ Leonard Feather and Ira Gitler, *the Biographical Encyclopedia of Jazz* (New York, Oxford University Press), 312.

⁹ "George Gershwin", *The Biography.com website*, accessed Jun 25, 2015, <http://www.biography.com/people/george-gershwin-9309643>.

From 1920 to 1924, Gershwin composed for an annual production put on by George White. After a show titled “Blue Monday,” the bandleader in the pit, Paul Whiteman, asked Gershwin to create a jazz number that would heighten the genre’s respectability.

Legend has it that Gershwin forgot about the request until he read a newspaper article announcing the fact that Whiteman’s latest concert would feature a new Gershwin composition. Writing at a manic pace in order to meet the deadline, Gershwin composed what is perhaps his best-known work, “Rhapsody in Blue”¹⁰.

During this time, and in the years that followed, Gershwin wrote numerous songs for stage and screen that quickly became standards, including “Oh, Lady Be Good!” “Someone to Watch over Me,” “Strike Up the Band,” “Embraceable You,” “Let’s Call the Whole Thing Off” and “They Can’t Take That Away from Me”. His lyricist for nearly all of these tunes was his older brother, Ira, whose witty lyrics and inventive wordplay received nearly as much acclaim as George’s compositions.

In 1935, a decade after composing “Rhapsody in Blue”, Gershwin debuted his most ambitious composition, “Porgy and Bess”. The composition, which was based on the novel “Porgy” by Dubose Heyward, drew from both popular and classical influences. Gershwin called it his “folk opera”, and it is considered to not only be Gershwin’s most complex and best-known works, but also among the most important American musical compositions of the 20th century.¹¹

¹⁰ "George Gershwin", *The Biography.com website*, accessed Jun 25, 2015, <http://www.biography.com/people/george-gershwin-9309643>.

¹¹ "ibid."

Duke Ellington

Born on April 29, 1899, Duke Ellington was raised by two talented, musical parents in a middle-class neighborhood of Washington DC¹².

At the age of seven, he began studying piano and earned the nickname "Duke" for his gentlemanly ways. Inspired by his job as a soda jerk, he wrote his first composition, "Soda Fountain Rag", at the age of 15. Despite being awarded an art scholarship to the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, New York, Ellington followed his passion for ragtime and began to play professionally at age 17. In the 1920s, Ellington performed in Broadway nightclubs as the bandleader of a sextet, a group that in time grew to a 10-piece ensemble. Ellington sought out musicians with unique playing styles, such as Bubber Miley, who used a plunger to make the "wa-wa" sound, and Joe Nanton, who gave the world his trombone "growl". At various times, his ensemble included the trumpeter Cootie Williams, cornetist Rex Stewart and alto saxophonist Johnny Hodges. Ellington made hundreds of recordings with his bands, appeared in films and on radio, and toured Europe on two occasions in the 1930s.

Ellington's fame grew up in the 1940s when he composed several masterworks, including "Concerto for Cootie", "Cotton Tail" and "Ko-Ko". Some of his most popular songs included "It Don't Mean a Thing if It Ain't Got That Swing", "Sophisticated Lady", "Prelude to a Kiss", "Solitude", and "Satin Doll". A number of his hits were sung by the impressive Ivie Anderson, a favorite female vocalist of Duke's band.

¹² "Duke Ellington", *The Biography.com website*, accessed Jun 22, 2015, <http://www.biography.com/people/duke-ellington-9286338>.

It was Ellington's sense of musical drama that made him stand out. His blend of melodies, rhythms and subtle sonic movements gave audiences a new experience yet accessible jazz that made the heart swing.¹³

“Some of Ellington’s voicings and orchestrations were so unique that you couldn’t tell which instruments were playing together on the records, you had to see the band in person to figure it out”¹⁴.

Gil Evans

Gil Evans (Ian Ernest Gilmore Green) was born May 13, 1912, in Toronto, Canada¹⁵.

The Evans family moved to Stockton, California in 1928, where Gil entered high school as a junior, and started teaching himself about music. He spent a lot of time listening to jazz on records and on the radio. Gil Evans was a great admirer of Armstrong: “Everything I ever learned about jazz came from Louis Armstrong, how to handle a song and how to love music”¹⁶. Evans formed his first small dance band with some school friends.

They played regularly at a Stockton dance hall where they made their first radio broadcasts. One of the band members was trumpet player Jimmy Maxwell, who went on to work with Benny Goodman and other prominent musicians.

¹³ "Duke Ellington", The Biography.com website, <http://www.biography.com/people/duke-ellington-9286338>, (accessed Jun 22, 2015).

¹⁴ Paul F. Berliner, *Thinking in Jazz*, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press), 296.

¹⁵ Leonard Feather and Ira Gitler, *the Biographical Encyclopedia of Jazz* (New York, Oxford University Press), 214.

¹⁶ "Gil Evans", *Gil Evans website*, accessed Jun 25, 2015, <http://www.gilevans.com/Home/About>.

In the summer of 1935, the band played all summer at the Capitola Ballroom near Santa Cruz, California, and Gil Evans became locally known as “The Prince of Swing”. Evans modeled the band on the Casa Loma Orchestra, encouraging his musicians to double on a variety of instruments. He held rehearsals for several hours a day, and pushed his musicians to sound as good as possible. Their efforts paid off: that fall Evans’s band was hired as the house band at the Rendezvous Ballroom in Balboa Beach, south of Los Angeles.

In the fall of 1937, Gil Evans and His Orchestra went on its first tour to Northern California, Oregon and Washington, and end up staying for five weeks at the Trianon Ballroom in Seattle. In a letter to friends, Gil wrote: “Everything is going fine up here. Up until now they’ve always had sweet bands so we’re still a little worried... the main problem has been trying to establish credit in the various eating establishments”. Gil’s band subbed for Duke Ellington’s Orchestra, which was scheduled at the Trianon, but had been stuck in California due to a blizzard.

Through this period, Evans, even then a perfectionist about the band’s sound, turned down some offers because he thought his band “was not ready”. Other factors also contributed to the fact that Evans could not find steady work for his band. He got an offer to turn over his band to vocalist Skinnay Ennis; Ennis had immediate bookings, and Evans stayed on as his arranger. After a few months, the band was hired for comedian Bob Hope’s new nationally syndicated radio show, which was broadcast from Los Angeles, so Evans and some of his musicians moved there. The well-established arranger Claude Thornhill was hired as chief arranger for the show. Thornhill was classically trained musician with a flair for orchestral sonorities. Evans learned a lot about orchestration from Thornhill, and the two developed a friendship, as well.

The Hope show went on tour in 1940, and Evans visited New York City for the first time. He was thrilled to check out the jazz scene he has heard so much about on 52nd Street. A few months later, Thornhill formed his own big band, and it was hired to play at the Glen Island Casino, a supper club near New York City. The club had a radio wire, and its shows were broadcast across the country. Writing for the Claude Thornhill Orchestra, with its beautiful sounding woodwinds and French horns, had a huge appeal for Evans.¹⁷.

Claus Ogerman

German arranger, conductor, composer, Claus Ogerman (born 1930 in Poland) has been widely-admired for five decades for his large orchestra arrangements of often brooding unison strings. His many strings often blossom into a sumptuous harmony highlighted by soloing flutes¹⁸. He is best known for his brilliant and unparalleled arrangements of Brazillian music on a series of Antonio Carlos Jobim albums nearly the polar opposite of his traditional European classical music training. Ogerman also arranged Jobim's compositions on the acclaimed 1967 album "Francis Albert Sinatra and Antonio Carlos Jobim".

In the 1950's, Ogerman worked in Germany as an arranger-pianist with Kurt Edelhagen and with Max Greger. In 1959, he moved to New York City to begin an arranging career as light classical music interest started to rapidly decline. Despite being immediately saddled with lesser arranging assignments in a fast-changing American music business, he firmly established himself in the recording studios with his

¹⁷ "Gil Evans", *Gil Evans website*, accessed Jun 25, 2015, <http://www.gilevans.com/Home/About>.

¹⁸ "Claus Ogerman", accessed Jun 25, 2015, http://www.mymusicbase.ru/PPB/ppb19/Bio_1929.htm.

versatile skills such that his work is still heard in commercials, elevators and recordings of all types. In 1963, he joined Creed Taylor's Verve/MGM Records, working on recordings by Jobim, Bill Evans, Wes Montgomery, Kai Winding and Cal Tjader. Taylor sold Verve Records and brought Ogerman over to arrange Jobim's Wave on his new CTI label. Ogerman later worked on albums by Oscar Peterson, Nelson Riddle (his favorite orchestrator) and others at the German MPS label. His other collaborations include work with Benny Goodman, Joao Gilberto, Astrud Gilberto, Joao Donato, Betty Carter, Leslie Gore and Michael Franks. Ogerman arranged best selling albums for Connie Francis and The Drifters. He has written jazz charts for Stan Getz, Freddie Hubbard, and Stanley Turrentine, among others. He has composed for many German films as well. He greatly regrets missing Glenn Gould's request to play on the arrangements he did for Barbara Streisand's "Classical Barbra" album.

In 1976, Jobim gave Ogerman the back side of his "Urubu", LP to exclusively feature his strings while Bill Evans similarly allowed Ogerman great latitude on his albums. Ogerman's piano playing, which included early work with Chet Baker, can be heard to great affect on Jobim's best album "Terra Brasilis" (1980), featuring his masterful reworking of his arrangements from Jobim's 1960's American albums, highlighted by "Double Rainbow".¹⁹

After many Grammy nominations over the years, Ogerman won the 1979 Grammy for Best Arrangement on an Instrumental Recording - George Benson's "Soulful Strut" Living Inside Your Love. He also solidified the jazz guitarist's pop vocal career with his arrangements on Benson's hugely selling album "Breezin".

¹⁹ "Claus Ogerman", accessed Jun 25, 2015, http://www.mymusicbase.ru/PPB/ppb19/Bio_1929.htm.

Since the 1970's, Claus has devoted himself almost exclusively to serious compositions. His commissions and projects include a ballet score for the American Ballet Theatre (Some Times), a work for jazz piano and orchestra (Symbiosis) for Bill Evans, a work for saxophone and orchestra (Cityscape, which includes Symphonic Dances) for Michael Brecker, a song cycle (Tagore-Lieder) after poems by Rabindranath Tagore that was recorded by Met soprano Judith Blegen and mezzo-soprano Brigitte Fassbaender, Concerto Lirico and Sarabande-Fantasia for violin and orchestra that was recorded by Aaron Rosand, 10 Songs for Chorus A-Capella After Poems by Georg Heym that was recorded by the Cologne Radio Chorus, a work for violin and orchestra (Preludio and Chant recorded by world-renowned violinist Gideon Kremer), and many more.

After 20 years away from jazz and popular music, Diana Krall coaxes Claus to arrange and conduct the London Symphony Orchestra on her best-selling album "The Look of Love".²⁰

Vince Mendoza

Born in 1961 in Norwalk, Connecticut, Mendoza began learning classical guitar and piano from an early age. His musical influences ran from Bach to Aretha Franklin to Henry Mancini. However, discovering Miles Davis, Gil Evans, and later, Igor Stravinsky and Alban Berg gave him a further complex perspective of the construction of musical forms and ideas. Taking up the trumpet during high school, he later earned a degree in music composition at Ohio State University, before moving to Los Angeles. The music of

²⁰ "Claus Ogerman", accessed Jun 25, 2015, http://www.mymusicbase.ru/PPB/ppb19/Bio_1929.htm.

Joe Zawinul and Wayne Shorter became a strong influence on his big band writing. He began working in the studios, composing music for television, while continuing to add to his extensive body of work written for big band. He completed his post-graduate composition and conducting studies at the University of Southern California. During this time, he met a kindred spirit in drummer Peter Erskine, who included him in his mixed ensemble recording, "Transition" on Denon records. Mendoza contributed several compositions to this recording as well as on some of Erskine's subsequent recordings, they have since become frequent collaborators.

His early solo albums on Blue Note Records, "Start Here" and "Instructions Inside", were critical triumphs that featured such artists as John Scofield, Joe Lovano, Ralph Towner, Bob Mintzer, Randy Brecker, Peter Erskine and others. "Start Here" was voted one of Jazziz Magazine's "Top Picks" and Mendoza was recognized as "Best Composer/Arranger" by Swing Journal's critics poll in Japan. Through his profile-building stint as guest arranger and conductor of the WDR Big Band, based in Cologne, Germany, Mendoza became widely known in Europe as a multi-talented composer arranger with a deep understanding of contemporary styles. His work on the CD "The Vince Mendoza / Arif Mardin Project: Jazzpaña" with the WDR Big Band, brought him a Grammy nomination for "best instrumental arrangement". Since then, Gary Burton, Pat Metheny, Michael Brecker, Charlie Haden, Andy Narell, Kurt Elling and John Abercrombie have prominently featured Vince Mendoza's compositions and arrangements on their albums.

Mendoza has written commissioned compositions and arrangements for world-renowned classical and jazz groups, that include the Turtle Island String Quartet, the

Debussy Trio, the L.A. Guitar Quartet, the Metropole Orchestra and the Berlin Philharmonic.

His CD “Epiphany” is a stunning set of compositions for the London Symphony Orchestra and jazz soloists. Effortlessly combining his beautifully crafted orchestral arrangements, strong melodic compositions, extended forms and inspired jazz soloists, this is an album only Mendoza could conceive and execute with such grace. Joined by old friends, Abercrombie, Brecker, Erskine, Lovano and Kenny Wheeler, as well as the sublime bass work of Marc Johnson and piano of John Taylor, Mendoza sets the scene of each piece with the orchestra, allowing these seven great jazz “voices” to deliver the next layer of emotive harmony and expression. With such a huge palette of both sounds and sonorities the results conjure up strong narratives. Mendoza’s skill for “casting” the hard-edged brilliance of Michael Brecker for the harder tempos alongside the soft lyricism of Joe Lovano for the poetic pulse of quieter songs defines his huge talents as a truly modern composer, conductor and arranger.

Managing to combine his own sophisticated solo work with widely acknowledged skills as a sympathetic vocal arranger has seen him earn the respect and ear of both the serious minded jazz and classical audience as well as that of discerning contemporary music fans and artists. Mendoza’s arranging has appeared on many critically acclaimed projects that include dozens of albums with song writing legends such as Björk, Chaka Khan, Al Jarreau, Bobby McFerrin, Sting and Joni Mitchell. He has 6 Grammy awards and 25 nominations

His skill for creating classic, sophisticated string arrangements also led to his orchestral score on the multi-million selling album “Swing When You’re Winning” by the enfant terrible of British pop, Robbie Williams. He was the orchestral voice behind

the score to Lars van Trier's "Dancer in the Dark" featuring Björk, as well as the dreamy orchestrations on her recent CD titled "Vespertine."

For the CD "Nights on Earth" Mendoza recruits an all-star cast of longtime collaborators like guitarists John Abercrombie, John Scofield and Nguyen Le, drummer Peter Erskine, percussionist Luis Conte, organist Larry Goldings, steel drummer Andy Narell, pianists Kenny Werner and Alan Pasqua, saxophonists Bob Mintzer and Joe Lovano. He is also joined by such new friends as Brazilian vocalist Luciana Souza, Malian kora player and singer Tom Diakite, Argentinian bandoneon master Hector del Curto, Algerian drummer Karim Ziad, French saxophonist Stéphane Guillaume and young American jazz stars in bassist Christian McBride, drummer Greg Hutchinson and trumpeter Ambrose Akinmusire.²¹

²¹ "Vince Mendoza", *official web-site*, accessed Jun 25, 2015, <http://vincemendoza.net/about-vince>.

The Metropole Orchestra

The Metropole Orchestra of the Netherlands, founded in 1945 by the Dutch Broadcasting Corporation, developed a reputation as a fully symphony orchestra with an integrated big band²².

At today is one of the most versatile orchestras worldwide, able to play many different styles such as: jazz, pop, world, cabaret, film scores.

This ensemble is for me one of the most important references for innovation, especially regarding music and production concept.

For research purpose I'm going to use as reference the time period between 2003 and 2013, when the composer and arranger Vince Mendoza took over as chief conductor, bringing a more international and versatile character.

Furthermore, in January 2015 I personally had the opportunity to visit a rehearsal of the Metropole Orchestra in Hilversum (the Netherlands) during the preparation of a Duke Ellington tribute concert, and to speak personally with Vince Mendoza about some aspects of his way of thinking in terms of arrangement.

²² "Metropole Orchestra", *official website*, accessed May 14, 2015, <http://www.mo.nl/en/the-orchestra>.

My Orchestra

The instruments that I used for the arrangements are the following:

- Violin I (6)
- Violin II (6)
- Viola (4)
- Cello (4)
- Double Bass (3)
- French Horn (1)
- Bassoon (1)
- Oboe (1)
- Clarinet (1)
- Flute (1)
- Flute/Piccolo (1)
- Trumpet (3)
- Trombone (4)
- Sax alto/soprano (2)
- Sax tenor (2)
-Percussions

Instrument Placement on Stage

The following example shows the floor plan of the concert *Jazz Para El Autismo* at theatre “La Rambleta”, 26th of May 2015.

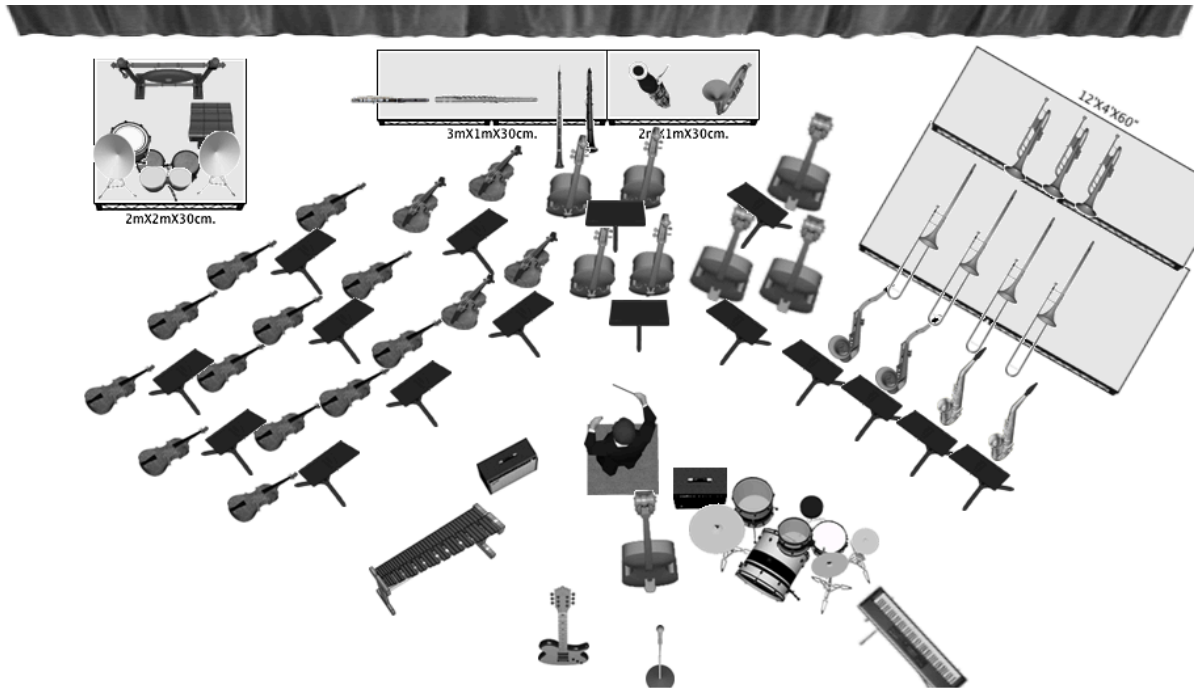


Fig. 1 – *Jazz Para El Autismo*, stage plan.

Similarities and differences

Following my reference, I choose the instruments trying to get close to the sound of the Metropole Orchestra, with some modifications due to the artistic choice of the arrangements.

Apart from this, there are some important differences between the projects I had the opportunity to revise about the Metropole Orchestra, and my project.

First, the main musical focus is going to be on the guitar trio. This brought me to change the position of drums and double bass, the MO usually have them center placed inside the orchestra, while I took it out and place it in front of it (see fig.1). In this way, I change the role of the rhythm section, from being part of the orchestra behind the soloist, to be in front, as the main focus of the concert. This gives to the trio more unity and freedom, especially from a rhythmic point of you, let's say that is a way for me to preserve the band musical style.

The second detail that differs from the MO is the placement of the instruments inside the orchestra. There are many different stage placements, and for what I could establish, from the video material I revised from the MO, they mostly have the brass section behind the strings. Talking whit some of the players of the string section of the MO after a rehearsal, I realized that they where not happy about that situation, simply because when the trombones where playing behind them, they could not ear what they where playing. Therefore, I start to think about a way to avoid this, and I chose to place the big band as it is traditionally used in jazz concerts, all together on one side. In this way, in the swing parts that I wrote, I will be sure that the sound and rhythm of it will be more solid and consistent.

Another difference from MO is that the conductor is not anymore in front of all the musicians, but in a middle position: in front of the orchestra but behind the trio and the soloists. This because I ideally thought of an orchestra able to follow the guitar trio and to achieve this there are two points to be satisfied: the trio as to be independent from the orchestra, and the orchestra need a reference that serve as a “glue” between the two. This “glue” is the conductor, which needs to listen the way that the trio is playing along the concert, and adapt his conduction to achieve a perfect rhythmic synchronization with the orchestra.

Works

In the next part of this research, I am going to analyze four compositions that were part of the concert *Jazz Para El Autismo*. For each one I'm going to explain: the concept, the structure, the melody (for original compositions) or the arrangement (in case of rearrangement of a song from another composer). Since this experience has been for me an occasion for a real case of study and research, I wanted for every arrangement to follow a conceptual guideline, created by myself, with the purpose to avoid to lose the focus during the writing process, and eventually to measure the level of accomplishment at the end of it.

Dance

Concept

The concept I had in mind was to write a song with a traditional swing big band section arrangement and, as a contrast, a melody presented by the rest of the orchestra (strings woodwinds) and differently rearranged along the tune, this over a latin rhythm played by percussions and drums.

Another tool that I wanted to use was a continuous improvisation element, to be carried throughout the entire piece. I decided then to give this part to the percussionist, writing only some suggestions along the song to be interpreted freely and to improvise what that. In addition, during the guitar solo section the percussion is constantly interacting with it, creating a collective improvisation over written orchestra parts.

Structure

For this song, I wanted the structure to be built over the conceptual elements that I have just explained. The structural elements I wanted are: an introduction, to set the groove, an A part that could vary each time we listen to it, a B part that involved a traditional big band sound, improvisation sections, and a coda. The result of this is a structure that almost does not follow symmetry or apparent geometry:

	INTRO	THEME A	THEME B	THEME A	GUITAR SOLO	THEME A	THEME B	PERCUSSION SOLO	CODA
BARS	24	32	31	24	55	36	31	OPEN	10

Fig. 2 – *Dance*, structure.

The only constant element is the “Theme B” section, which is the swinging part.

Melody

As we can see in the fig. 2 the song is composed by two main themes: A and B.

The theme A is played over a latin rhythm, and it is divided in two main elements: a melodic phrase (4+2 bars) and a harmonic part (2 bars).

Fig. 3, Jacopo Mezzanotti, *Dance*, mm. 12-20

Fig. 4, Jacopo Mezzanotti, *Dance*, mm. 23-31

In fig. 3 we can see the main melodic element played by the violas, the phrase is 8 bars long and is divided in two elements X and Y, divided by two bars of harmony played by violins, cellos and double bass, that give space to the ending line of the phrase.

This theme is repeated with a harmonic interlude between the various repetitions (fig. 4). The melody is orchestrated every time in a different way, to keep the attention of the listener.

The main key of the song is Fm but as we can see, the main melody is written between F minor and F diminished creating an ambiguous atmosphere.

The theme B, on the other hand, is a completely different arranging and composing style, here I used a more jazz big band traditional approach, starting with thickened saxophone lines with trumpets and trombones hits (Fig.5), to develop slowly into a big orchestra crescendo that mix the different styles of the song before going back to the original latin feeling.

Fig. 5, Jacopo Mezzanotti, *Dance*, mm. 56-61



This first fragment of the theme B is played by the saxophones harmonized. As we can see in the original score this second theme is longer than the previous one, it's a 31 bars melody whit different sections that ends with a 7 bars orchestral crescendo, to bring the tension to the maximum before going back to the other atmosphere of the theme A and introduce the guitar solo.

Summertime

Concept

The concept for this song is to take a famous jazz standard tune and find an interesting arrangement for it. My choice went on one of the most arranged jazz standards of all time: Summertime, by George Gershwin, from the opera Porgy and Bess. Since the song is well known to be in Am key, my idea for a change has been to drastically use A major, but in a way for the listener to do not be shocked from the change. As we are going to see in detail, I used the key of Dbm harmonic which contain both chords, Am and A major.

First, let see the new structure of the song.

Structure

Since I wanted to rearrange in a completely new way I thought that I could also work on the structure, always in a way for the listener to do not ear drastic changes.

Because this rearrangement is not intended to be singed, but played with guitar or another instrument, I decided to cut the last two bars of the original structure and connect directly the end of the theme with the beginning (see fig. 7). This gives a sense of unfinished structure and brings a subtle tension to the performance.

The structure of the new arrangement is the following:

	THEME	THEME	GUITAR SOLO	THEME	CODA
BARS	14	14	14+14	14	3

Fig. 6 – *Summertime*, structure.

The arrangement structure is simple, the trio plays the first theme and the orchestra enters at the end of it and supports the next theme exposition. For the guitar solo is similar, the first 14 bars are only in trio and in the second ones the orchestra enters with the background. The last theme shows something new, the trio goes away and the orchestra plays the first part of the theme, fading out slowly in the last bars of the melody that is played again by the guitar.

Arrangement

Since the melody is famous and beautiful by itself I did not want to modify it, what I changed are the chords that support it. Perhaps playing the melody of Summertime I realized immediately that there is a lot of space between the phrases, and this brought me to think to use it as an opportunity to interact with the song without change it, just adding different colors in these empty spaces.

Following this concept, as said earlier, I decided to cut the last two bars of the original theme which didn't contain any melody but the pick up to go back to the top. As we see the last note of the melody is C, the same last note of the pick up, this allow the listener to grab the same color of the pick up even though there is no pick up. The result is that the second time we play the melody is like a surprise since there is no preparation for it.

Fig. 7, Jacopo Mezzanotti, *Summertime*, mm. 1-16

The image displays a musical score for the piece 'Summertime' by Jacopo Mezzanotti, covering measures 1 through 16. The score is written in 4/4 time and features a treble clef. The key signature consists of one flat (B-flat). The notation includes a melody line and a bass line. The melody begins with a quarter note G4, followed by quarter notes A4 and B4. The bass line starts with a half note chord of B-flat2 and D3. The piece includes several triplet markings, notably in measures 3, 7, and 16. Measure 16 concludes with a triplet of eighth notes G4, A4, and B4. The score is divided into four systems, with measure numbers 5, 9, and 13 indicated at the beginning of their respective lines.

Besides Your Loneliness

Concept

Here my goal was to compose a song as an emotional journey, using harmony and melody in a way to express a good balance of tension and release, and use the orchestra to emphasize subtly this path.

The result is a medium-ballad rumba song that follows this emotional path:

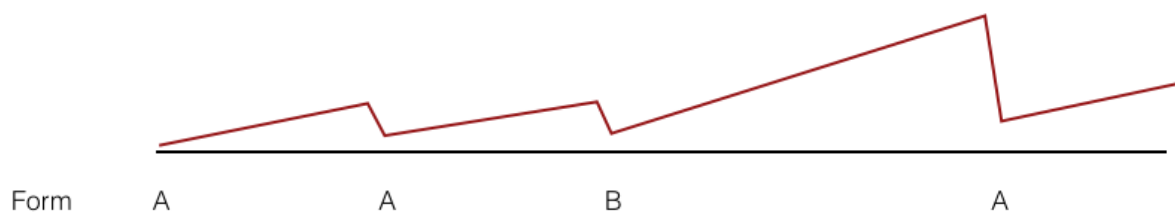


Fig. 8 - *Besides Your Loneliness*, orchestra dramatic development.

Structure

As shown in fig. 7 the structure is A A B A' with a B section that is almost double compared with the A. The first two A are 14 bars each one while the last one is 16, this because the last time I repeated a two bar melody twice to give a feeling of ending repetition.

In the B part, I wanted to present a different music material that could create a contrast from the previous section. To achieve this I had to create a longer development for the listener to enter gradually and feel comfortable in the new material. Here the orchestra enter and create a 24 bars crescendo that support the dramatic path of the

melody, that culminate in a D7 chord and leave one measure of silence before going back to the last head.

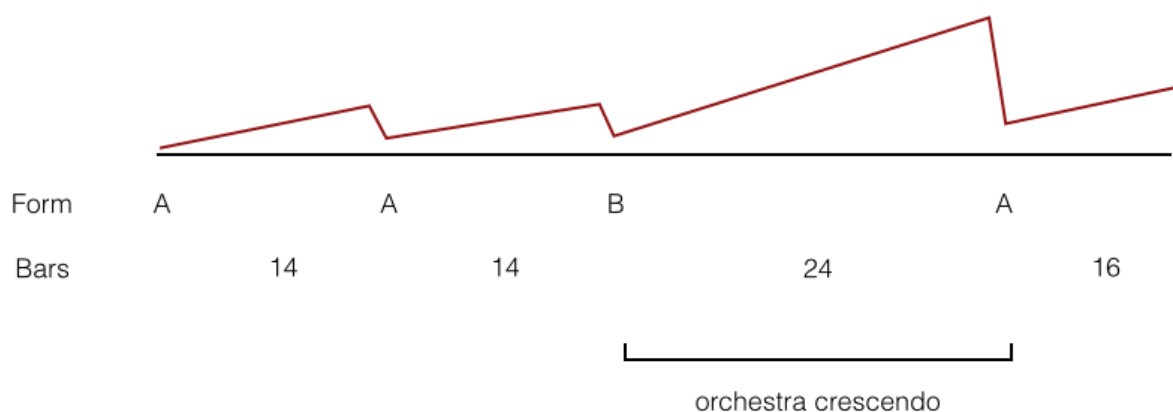


Fig. 9 – *Besides Your Loneliness*, orchestra dramatic development.

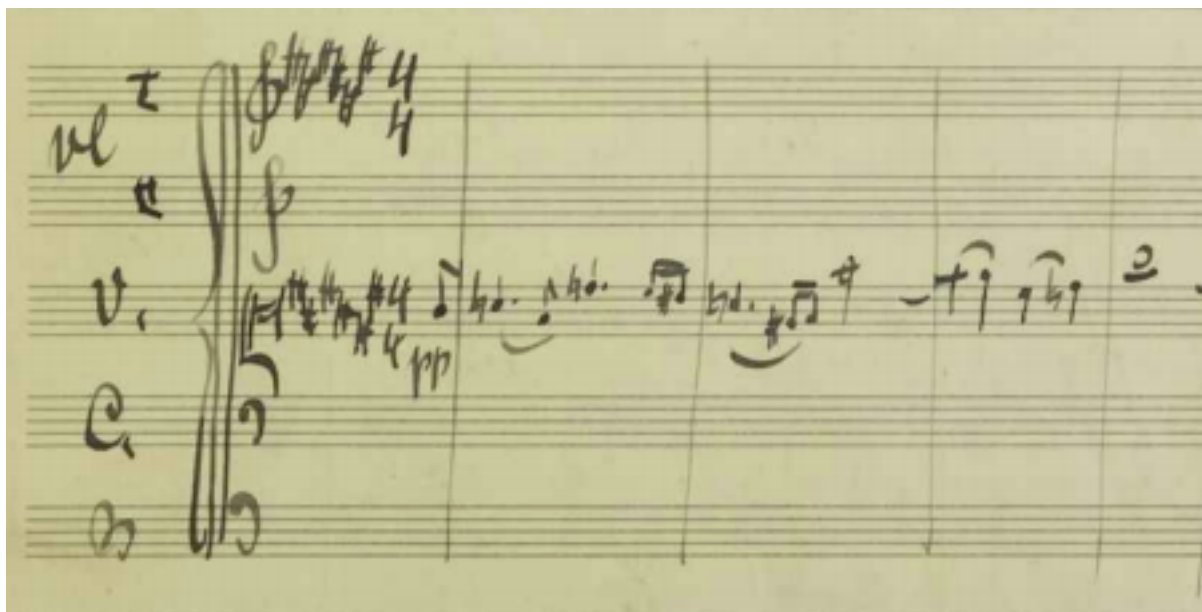
The entire song is repeated twice, the first time is the theme and the second time the solo part. The solo is played over the first two A and the B, to go back to the theme in the last A.

Melody

The melody, together with the harmony, has one of the most important roles in this song. The first part of the melody is a homage to one of the most important composers of last century that strongly influenced my musical background, his name is Gustav Mahler.

Here is the original viola intro from Mahler's tenth symphony:

Fig. 10, Gustav Mahler, symphony n. 10, *Adagio*, mm. 1-4



Besides Your Loneliness A theme:

Fig. 11, Jacopo Mezzanotti, *Besides Your Loneliness*, mm. 1-8



We can see in these two figures the material I used as quotation from Mahler's composition. The first five note pitches are exactly the same, then the similarities are less, and ends when the melody reach the high C-sharp, to develop into a different musical path from the citation.

The A theme is repeated twice but the second time with a different ending, to release the tension and to prepare for the next section. Also the harmony follows the same concept, the first ending shows a Dmaj7 going to Gmaj#11 as pick up for the next

A theme, while the second time the Dmaj7 turns to a D7 chord to present the new key of the new section.

In the B part, we can listen a new melodic material that contrast with the previous one. First, now the melody is structured in a straight line of eight bars, and repeated three times, the last one a fourth above. If in the A section, the melody was moving inside a range of a minor 10th interval, now the new line has a diminished 5th interval range. Is a simpler phrase with longer notes, that leave much more space to the orchestra background development and room for another musician to improvise over the theme. In fact, during the soprano's solo, in the B part of the form, guitar and vibraphone play the theme, as would be a background for the improviser, and to bring slowly back the attention of the listener to the main theme that is coming back.

If usually the higher note of the melody is used to emphasize the most dramatic moment of the song, here I used it to emphasize the most relieving part, the ending, that bring back all the tension built along the entire piece. This is made possible by the last three notes in a half tone distance each other with the following relation toward the main key of D major: 9th, b3rd, 3rd.

D&D

Concept

For this song, I focused on the arrangement and orchestration side, using for it a composition by the pianist Polo Ortí. I wanted to express and enhance the key points of the songs using the different colors of the orchestra, and find a way to interact with it.

Structure

The song is an 81 bar theme and for this arrangement I thought to play it twice at the beginning, the first time in quintet (drums, double bass, guitar, vibraphone and piano), and the second time orchestrated. To introduce the orchestra I wrote a 24 bars crescendo before the second exposition of the theme.

For the beginning, I decided to write an orchestra introduction using a rhythmic element that we are going to see again at the end of the song. The main structure is repeated five times in the entire arrangement and each time in a different way.

The arrangement scheme is the following:

	INTRO	THEME	THEME	PIANO SOLO	VIBRAPHONE SOLO	THEME	CODA
BARS	20	81	81	81	81	81	12

Fig. 12 – D&D Structure.

Arrangement

The song starts with a drums solo of 4 measures to enter in the real intro of 16 bars. Since the melody of this song is long and is composed by different melodies

connected together, I thought to use the various colors of the orchestra to emphasize these fragments with the use of different instruments, or combinations of them. For this reason, I decided to expose the first time the theme with the vibraphone and guitar, so the listener have a chance to ear clearly the melody without being confused by the rapid change of the instrumentation. After this first exposure will be much easier to divide the theme without losing their attention.

The orchestration starts with the violins plus parts of the woodwinds (flute, oboe, clarinet), playing the most recognizable part of the melody:

Fig. 13, Polo Ortí/Jacopo Mezzanotti, *D&D*, mm. 102-109

The musical score for Figure 13 consists of five staves. The top two staves are for Violin I (Vln. I) and Violin II (Vln. II), both in treble clef. The third staff is for Viola (Vla.) in alto clef. The fourth staff is for Violoncello (Vc.) in bass clef. The fifth staff is for Contrabass (Cb.) in bass clef. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#). The time signature is 4/4. The dynamic marking *mf* (mezzo-forte) is present at the beginning of each staff. The melody in the violins is a sequence of eighth and quarter notes with slurs. The lower strings provide harmonic support with sustained notes and chords.

At the same time, we see the rest of the strings support the harmony (Fig. 13). The orchestration gradually change until the entrance of the big band section that now plays the same melody fragment but in another key (Fig 14).

Fig. 14, Polo Ortí/Jacopo Mezzanotti, *D&D*, mm. 127-136

The image shows a musical score for seven brass instruments: three Trumpets (Tpt. 1, 2, 3) and four Trombones (Tbn. 1, 2, 3, 4). The score is written in a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature. The music is in a moderate tempo and features a melodic line that is shared across all instruments. The dynamics are marked as *mf* (mezzo-forte). Red lines are drawn under the notes in the trumpet and trombone parts, indicating the melodic line. The score is divided into measures by vertical bar lines.

From here, until the piano solo, the melody is divided between the entire orchestra, with a natural fading effect of timbres (Fig. 15)

Fig. 15, Polo Ortí/Jacopo Mezzanotti, *D&D*, mm. 141-153

The image shows a musical score for seven woodwind instruments: two Flutes (Fl. 1, 2), Oboe (Ob.), Bass Clarinet (B♭ Cl.), Bassoon (Bsn.), Horn (Hn.), Saxophone 1 (Sx. 1), and Saxophone 2 (Sx. 2). The score is written in a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature. The music is in a moderate tempo and features a melodic line that is shared across all instruments. The dynamics are marked as *mf* (mezzo-forte). Red lines are drawn under the notes in the woodwind parts, indicating the melodic line. The score is divided into measures by vertical bar lines. A red annotation "to Flute" is present above the first flute staff.

The background for the solos has been written with the same concept, but with a lighter effect, to avoid taking too much focus apart from the soloist. In this case, the

woodwind section is left apart, and the background is built alternating strings and big band section, culminating every time with a crescendo to launch the next part.

The last time we hear the theme I used a “heavier orchestration” adding more instruments playing the theme, and starting immediately with the big band, to achieve amore direct sound effect.

The ending is a big orchestra crescendo that moves up always a minor 3rd until goes back to the starting chord (F#sus4), here there is a trading between the orchestra and the drums, until a two bars fragment of the main melody calls the ending.

Working With the Jazz Trio

An important aspect of this project is the work, or better the pre-work and the preparation to the concert with my trio. Since hiring and organizing an orchestra is a big task and an expensive work, is crucial to prepare the show previously with the rhythm section.

First, I write the arrangements and I try them with the trio, then I see what works better and what not, and according to what is essential and what is not, I revise the scores. For me is really important, during this first step of the process, to teach the song to the musicians by ear; I don't won't for them to read anything until the score is ultimate, first because I can see immediately if what I wrote is recognizable by a professional musicians, and second because this will help the process of learning the song in a more natural and spontaneous way. Furthermore, every time I write a new composition or arrangement, I have in mind the players that are going to perform it, to emphasize their skills and put them in a comfortable music environment.

From this pre-work, I can adjust the orchestra experience to the rhythm section and I can create a solid base for the orchestra rehearsal. I ultimate then the scores and I prepare the mockups. I pretend then from the rhythm section to learn all the arrangements by memory, in a way to have their full attention on the interplay and improvisation during the performance. John Hicks said about Art Blackey with the Jazz Messenger: "With Blackey, you had to memorize the music, since you couldn't have it on the band stand"²³.

²³ Paul F. Berliner, *Thinking in Jazz*, (Chiacago, University of Chicago Press), 303.

At this point the trio is ready for the orchestra rehearsals, where the only main focus is going to be on the orchestra itself, adjusting tuning and note issues, and most important, trying to find the balance between the different time perception of the players, and achieving a good groove all together.

Working With the Orchestra

Complementary of the work with the trio, is the preparation and workout of the orchestra.

In most cases, we have orchestras composed by classically trained musicians, that have a different approach to the scores and to the direction, if compared with jazz trained players. In this case, I used a mixed orchestra, so from one side I have a big band of jazz musicians, and on the other side an orchestra of classical players. The key point here is to find the common ground between their various timing perception and unifying it, to achieve a unique style of playing the same music material.

The most important role for this to be possible is the orchestra conductor, who has the task to find an adequate way of conducting for this type of repertoire. During the rehearsal, I think that is a good idea to have at first separate groups, for example string only, string plus woodwinds, big band, and finally all the orchestra together. A good option would be also to have a rehearsal with the trio plus the conductor, in a way to show him/her the way of playing of the band. Finally, a couple of complete rehearsals with the trio plus the orchestra, focusing mainly on the rhythmical connection between the two groups.

Conclusions

Having the opportunity to arrange for such an orchestra is a unique experience, for this reason I wanted to build a real concert, with real musicians and deadlines, to be involved in a real life situation. I spent four months to write *Jazz Para El Autismo*, and during this time I had the chance to see an evolution of my approach to the arrangement process, and at the same time also to my stylistic way of playing, being more aware of all the aspects of a music performance. I had also the wonderful chance to meet one of my heroes, Vince Mendoza, and to take some suggestions and ideas about jazz orchestra's thinking.

Working then with more than forty musicians, being responsible for them, being able to make hundred of decisions on the spot, during the rehearsals, has been for me a music and a life lesson. Now I'm more aware of my possibilities, my capacity to take decisions, and I learned that the first step to be a successful musician and arranger is to have a clear idea of what is going to happen in every moment of the performance, and how this influence the perception of every musician on stage. Furthermore, I learned to be in command of any kind of unexpected situations that might happen during a jazz concert, finding a way to solve it, not only as a musician, but also as an arranger.

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