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Marketing Your Craft from the Inside Out

When most people think of the word "marketing," they envision powerful Madison Avenue executives and expensive advertising campaigns. But when I think about marketing myself as a musician, I embrace the idea that no amount of money, no carefully researched demographic targeting or promotional photo can substitute for solid organization of thought. The internal organization of well-constructed musical arrangements communicates to a listener far better than any clever copywriter's description of your art.

The emotional impact of your music on your audience is the one element that we as composers/arrangers can control. It is here that we determine if the consumer will want more or move on to the next experience. Below, I describe a few methods I have employed to help achieve this end. Without a well-constructed product, a sustained marketing effort will not only be unsuccessful, it will probably never *be*.

Getting Started

I attended a master class by Herbie Hancock many years ago where he said he got the idea for "Dolphin Dance" by listening to the Frank Foster tune "Shiny Stockings." I would have never put the two together. I listened to "Dolphin Dance" again, and there it was—obvious references to "Shiny Stockings," especially in the last 14 bars of the tune.

I fell in love with Béla Bartók's composition "Music For Strings, Percussion And Celesta" (youtu.be/m129k5YcQnU). There is a sequence of ensemble "hits" from bar 200 to bar 240, scored for piano and strings. The "ensemble" plays a homophonic rhythmic figure over percussion. The development required to reach this section logically took a long time. I decided to extract the idea and ended up with a completely new piece of music entitled "Mad Dog 245." It sounds almost nothing like the Bartók piece, but it was a concept that I discovered and could work with.

Learning the craft is a requirement for any type of arranging or composition, but you don't have to know everything before you start. You just need an idea. For Hancock, it was "Shiny Stockings"; for me, it was the Bartók piece. Pick a bass line that you like, borrow it, vary it and use it to build a new musical work. Choose a tune that speaks to you and use it as a guide.

Another idea is to pick a scale that has a great deal of color and design a melody based on it. Move it around to different key centers, and use the three serially based variations of your line: retrograde (backwards), inversion (upside-down) and retrograde inversion (backward and upside-down). It is a starting point.

You will, as I have discovered, learn more by doing than by formal analysis alone.

A Line That Works

My wife is a painter. Once I was attempting to draw a tree or something and it wasn't looking much like the object I was studying. My wife, however, can sit down and in a short time, with a pencil and paper, create a drawing that looks just like the object she is observing. So I asked her what I was doing wrong. Her answer has had a lasting impact on my composition. She said that she never tries to draw "the perfect line," that instead her goal is to come up with "a line that works." So, rather than spending hours trying to come up with the perfect countermelody, background figure or harmony, just find "a line that works." Once you have a framework that holds together, you can always change it. Your creative intuition will create your direction, and your craft level will define your ability to present your direction with clarity—just as the intuitive placing of marks on a page becomes an image.

Bill's Axiom

I live by one simple set of guidelines when composing or arranging. Actually, it's a fairly complex rule, but it is a musical axiom that can be applied to any musical system with consistency:

1) Repetition creates excitement to a point, and then becomes boring,

2) Variation creates interest to a point, and then becomes confusing.

3) Your job as a composer or arranger is to use repetition and variation to create music that is exciting and interesting without ever becoming boring or confusing.

Let's examine a composition by one of our greatest arranger/composers who has made use of this axiom.

Motivic Development

One of my favorite tunes is "Tiptoe" by Thad Jones. This can be found on the 1970 Blue Note album *Consummation* by the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Orchestra, or on YouTube (youtu.be/PyGt3tTiGAg).

Look at the first four notes: F, D, E♭, and then an E♭ an octave lower. This is the motive of the piece. If you study the score or listen to the recording you will notice this four-note motive repeated and varied in different ways. It is a small idea that is used to create all of the material in the chart. That all of the material is drawn from such a small source gives the chart unity. It requires organization to use all of these variations and make them hold together, but your thematic material is taken care of. You have a source for ideas that can grow organically and create a unified statement when you start to develop your arrangement.

One of the most interesting things to me about "Tiptoe" is the contrasting material presented by the trombone section and bass at the 1:40 point of the chart. This section introduces a completely different emotional feeling. At 2:30, we again hear the first four notes, but instead of saxophones with soprano lead we have the full ensemble setting up a sort of asymmetrical call-and-response with Mel Lewis on drums. The chart ends with an almost literal repetition of the original motive.

Beginning arrangers often have enough material for multiple compositions but make the mistake of attempting to fit all of it into one arrangement. A small source of information that is highly developed is a better way to go.

Rhythm

When I first moved to New York, I was fortunate to have some friends playing in the Mel Lewis Jazz Orchestra. I subbed periodically, but most importantly I became friends with Mel. I recorded my first demo in 1987 and asked him to listen to it and give me some feedback. After not hearing from him for several weeks, I called. He kept me on the phone for nearly two hours going over each arrangement and giving me what was one of the greatest composition lessons I've ever had.

The thing I remember most about the conversation was Mel saying, "I'm a drummer, I like rhythm." He went on to say that what communicates most, to even the most uninitiated listener, is rhythm. He told me that while he liked my harmonies and thought the charts were interesting, he would like to hear more rhythmic ideas. Now when I write, I try to remember to compose rhythmically as well as melodically.

It is often helpful to use varied but complementary rhythmic feels to create interest. I use very specific Afro-Cuban beats, or Brazilian rhythmic patterns, when I compose or arrange. Specific Latin patterns add interest to your arrangement and insure a certain amount of control. Books such as *Afro-Cuban Rhythms for Drumset* by Frank Malabe and Bob Weiner are a great resource. Study the pattern before you use it, particularly issues such as clave alignment. Make sure that your melodies and background figures fit with the clave, etc. Two of my favorite patterns are the mozambique (youtu.be/UCdeKmHwK30) and the songo (youtu.be/DG6qDpza6V0). Both patterns are specifically derived from Afro-Cuban rhythms by drummers using a standard drum kit.

I also vary the rhythmic style of compositions when programming a concert or recording. It's not interesting to listen to tune after tune with identical rhythmic feels and harmonic structures.

Melodic, Rhythmic Hooks

A hook is a group of notes, musical event or rhythmic pattern used in popular music to make a tune appealing and to capture the imagination of the listener. Most often it is catchy and repeated. The hook is most common in rock, r&b, hip-hop and dance, but it also applies to other types of music. The four-note motive that begins Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, the release to Bob Brookmeyer's "Samba Con Getchu" and a leitmotif in German opera are all devices employed to capture the imagination of the listener. Finding some sort of hook for a jazz piece is an easy way to insure that your music will stand out to your audience.

Program Music

Music such as "Prelude To The Afternoon Of A Faun" by Debussy or "The Sorcerer's Apprentice" by Dukas conjures a mental image. The Walt Disney film *Fantasia* makes use of several of these because it was easy to come up with illustrations to go along with the music.

I've done tone poems such as "Streetcorner Supermarket" (youtu.be/PRw6QpnE4Vk) and "Scootzie" (youtu.be/NsadPzpQNhM), both on my recent Planet Arts release *For Lew*, to conjure images that were part of my life when I first moved to New York, living in Hell's Kitchen. They are both programmatic by nature, which gives me great stories to relay to my audience when I perform them. It adds a dimension to the music to help my audience relate to me through experience as well as expression.

Finally, you have to figure out what audience would be attracted to your work. Building a following is easier if your target audience embraces a broader demographic. I spent a great deal of my career lamenting that if it weren't for the repetitive, lowest-common-denominator music on the radio, that real jazz would have an audience. It finally occurred to me that this same repetition when coupled with variation and applied to a more complex idiom could work to my advantage.

Conclusion

I've spent most of this article talking about the internal musical elements that will help you present your music to your public in the most memorable manner. In addition, I'd like to mention a few things I've learned during my 52-year-long career:

1) Dress up for your gigs.

2) Talk to your audience. Speak kindly to the people who showed up to hear you. It's an honor to present your art to others.

3) Be prepared. Rehearse.

If you find your own way to attract and hold an audience, you'll be successful. The process starts inside your work. When you reach out to a group of listeners who aren't obligated to come to your show, you must have something special to offer them. Your commitment to integrity and professionalism is a time-proven method of delivering your product with clarity. **DB**

Bill Warfield is a trumpeter, composer, arranger, bandleader and educator who has performed with Sonny Stitt, Ornette Coleman, Dave Liebman, Mel Lewis, Paul Anka, The Spinners and numerous artists on the New York scene. Warfield has taught arranging clinics internationally and frequently appears as a solo artist in Europe. He has written and arranged for the Dave Liebman Big Band, the Bill Kirchner Nonet, Eddie Palmieri and Paul Shaffer as well as for TV and film. Warfield has released 14 recordings as a leader, and he currently directs the Hell's Kitchen Funk Orchestra, The New York Jazz Octet, The New York Jazz Repertory Orchestra and the Bill Warfield Big Band. For the last 22 years, he has been the director of jazz and brass studies at Lehigh University in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. Visit him online at billwarfield.net.

REFERENCES & RESOURCES

Bill Warfield recommends the following reference books and online resources as essential tools for "marketing your craft from the inside out."

• *Afro-Cuban Rhythms for Drumset* (Alfred Music), by Frank Malabe and Bob Weiner
ISBN-10: 0897245741
ISBN-13: 978-0897245746

• *Inside the Score* (Kendor Publications), by Rayburn Wright
ISBN-10: 9991739661
ISBN-13: 978-9991739663

• *Changes over Time: The Evolution of Jazz Arranging* (Advance Music), by Fred Sturm
ISBN-10: 0206303130
ISBN-13: 978-0206303136