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Maria Schneider's Voicing Techniques: Annotated Bibliography

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Maria Schneider's Voicing Techniques
Annotated Bibliography

Since her emergence on the jazz scene, Maria Schneider has made a name for herself all around the world with her unique compositional voice. Despite her ever-increasing prominence and influence as a jazz composer, there is a startling lack of scholarly work on how she writes for her ensemble. It is my aim to begin to fill that gap by examining how she voices chords at critical moments in her pieces and juxtaposing the techniques in her earliest works, latest works, and traditional writing techniques.

Journal Articles

1. Julien, Patricia. "Four-Way Voicings in Jazz Arranging." *Jazz Education Journal* 39 no. 1 (August 2006): 56-60.

Patricia Julien is a jazz flautist and a composer who writes for many different types of ensembles including jazz combo and jazz big band. She received a Master's of Music in Jazz and Commercial Studies from the Manhattan School of Music and a PhD in music theory from the University of Maryland, College Park. After a number of other teaching positions, Julien now serves as a professor of music at the University of Vermont where she teaches music theory and jazz composition and arranging. In this article, Julien lays out a relatively simple framework for writing four part harmonies. She is quite strict in her approach, even compared to the likes of Lindsay. This introduction serves as the most basic forms of jazz harmony and it will be interesting to see how Schneider deviates from these techniques.

2. Stewart, Alex. "Contemporary New York City Big Bands: Composition, Arranging and Individuality in Orchestral Jazz." *Ethnomusicology* 48, no. 2 (Spring/Summer 2004): 169-202.

Alex Stewart is a professor of jazz studies and ethnomusicology at the University of Vermont. He is a published author, music director, and performer. In this Article, Stewart breaks down some segments of various contemporary big band charts to analyze how different artists make their individual mark. Stewart's analysis of the Schneider segment provides a nice example of how to analyze a chart as well as sparing future researchers the work of having to go over that segment. His astute observations about Schneider's writing here may be applicable in other places as well.

Liner Notes

3. Schneider, Maria, composer. *Data Lords*. Recorded August 30-September 2, 2019. ArtistShare. 2020. Booklet.

Schneider's music is often deeply autobiographical. *Data Lords* is a 2 disc set; one dedicated to the technological world and one devoted to the natural world. Schneider's notes reveal what she was trying to portray in her music. In this case, that means that she discusses her deep mistrust of technology and the increasingly unscrupulous practices of the major players in the industry as well as her affinity with and belief in the restorative properties of the natural world. In explaining the portrayal of these concepts, she sometimes drops some information about her thought process and how she wanted to convey her intended meaning. For example, for *Do No Evil*, Schneider discusses how this iconic line of text was dropped from Google's policies, making them a cartoonishly evil Data Lord. Consequently, she used many techniques of cartoon music writing in her composition. There may be other items of more specific useful information in the booklet.

4. ———, composer. *Evanescence*. Recorded September 1992. Enja ENJ-80482, 1994. Booklet.

This booklet represents what Schneider wanted to accomplish with her debut recording. She discusses each piece and explains its inspiration and construction. In many ways, the associated album represents a tribute to Schneider's mentor Gil Evans. The booklet is best used in conjunction with the associated scores and recordings. Since Maria Schneider is the author of all these sources, she is the ultimate authority on the music, what she wanted to accomplish in each piece, and how she set about accomplishing it.

Music Scores

5. Schneider, Maria. *Evanescence*. Edited by Fred Sturm. Vienna: UE Publishing Musikverlags GmbH, 1998.

This book is a primary source, containing all the scores from Maria Schneider's first studio album *Evanescence*. This resource will prove invaluable in charting Schneider's search for her own musical voice. There can be no more authoritative source on Schneider's scores than Schneider's scores. In order to hear the actual effects of her techniques, this source will likely need to be paired with the actual recording of *Evanescence*. The associated booklet with Schneider's notes on her own music may also shed some light on her approach. These sources used in combination with one another will be juxtaposed against both Schneider's later works and existing models of voicing techniques provided by the likes of Gary Lindsay, Michael Abene, and Rayburn Wright.

Monographs

6. Lindsay, Gary. *Jazz Arranging Techniques: From Quartet to Big Band*. Miami: Staff Art Publishing, 2005.

Gary Lindsay is a professor of music and the director of studio/jazz writing at the University of Miami Frost School of Music. Lindsay is a highly regarded arranger and

performer in the jazz world. This book is an excellent guide to beginner jazz arrangers. It covers everything from instrument ranges and intensity graphs to the grammar and psychology of musical notation to how to score chords in a wide variety of ways. The range of subjects, natural progression from one subject to the next, and thoughtful exercises throughout the book make it a common required text for jazz arranging classes. Compared to the Sussman book, this text is a little less broad and a little more focused on traditional big band techniques. This book will represent a fairly strict model of arranging techniques that Schneider sometimes uses but likely increasingly ignores as her own voice emerges over the course of her career.

7. Powers, Ann, and Daphne Carr. *Best Music Writing 2010*. Cambridge, Mass.: Da Capo Press, 2010

Ann Powers is one of the top music critics in the country, having worked on many highly regarded popular publications on the matter. In this book, Powers has collected a wide range of interviews with influential artists. The interview with Maria Schneider was conducted by Eugene Holley, Jr. who regularly contributes to some of the most important publications in the jazz sphere. This interview is a veritable treasure trove of information regarding Schneider's creative process and musical upbringing. She discusses not only her approach to writing but also names two texts which had a major impact on her writing: *Inside the Score* by Rayburn Wright and *The Lydian Chromatic Concept of Tonal Organization for Improvisation* by George Russell.

8. Russel, George. *The Lydian Chromatic Concept of Tonal Organization for Improvisation*. Morris Plains, NJ: Concept Publishing Co.

George Russel was a composer and an NEA Jazz Master credited with inventing the most important theory concept for modern jazz music. That theory is the basis for this book. Lydian Chromatic Theory challenges the supremacy of the major scale in western music and expands tonal possibilities. Beyond contributing to a framework of jazz analysis, this book is of special significance because Maria Schneider cites it as a major influence in *Best Music Writing 2010*.

9. Sussman, Richard and Michael Abene. *Jazz Composition and Arranging in the Digital Age*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Richard Sussman is an experienced musician and composer and has been on faculty at the Manhattan School of Music since 1986. Michael Abene is a highly regarded composer and arranger who has written for many artists, perhaps most notably Maynard Ferguson. This book is an in-depth guide on various arranging techniques for a variety of performing forces. Compared to Lindsay's book, this book is more in depth and covers a wider variety of writing techniques. As a result of the extra content, this book feels slightly less focused and reads less like the curriculum to an arranging class. Although this source is probably more useful as a

reference material than a book to be read cover to cover, this source will provide a framework to compare Schneider's polyphonic writing and chords with less orthodox voicing techniques against.

10. Wright, Rayburn, Sammy Nestico, Thad Jones, and Bob Brookmeyer. *Inside the Score : A Detailed Analysis of 8 Classic Jazz Ensemble Charts : Sammy Nestico, Thad Jones, Bob Brookmeyer*. Delevan, NY: Kendor Music, 1982.

Rayburn Wright served as a professor of jazz studies and contemporary media as well as the co-chair of the conducting and ensemble department at the Eastman School of Music. Wright held a master's degree and was accomplished as a composer, arranger, conductor, and director. This book is considered the golden standard for jazz studies books and is regarded by many jazz composers as the most authoritative text there is on the subject. The book contains detailed analyses of well known compositions by some of the most important and influential jazz big band composers including Bob Brookmeyer and Thad Jones. When it comes to breaking down how the classic writers composed, this text is the end-all be-all. This book will provide a detailed framework of how the classic writers may have influenced Schneider's writing as well as how Schneider may have deviated from the established norms of the style. In *Best Music Writing 2010* by Ann Powers, this book is named as a major influence on Schneider's work.

Albums

11. Schneider, Maria, composer. *Data Lords*. Recorded August 30-September 2, 2019. ArtistShare. 2020. CD.

Data Lords represents Maria Schneider's most recent compositional effort. The audio will be paired together with the scores for this album, the audio allowing us to hear Schneider's techniques in context. The voicing techniques Schneider employs here will be useful to compare against earlier arrangements and will likely be critical in establishing any changes in Schneider's writing over time. As with Schneider's other works, the techniques on display here will be compared against those described by the likes of Wright, Sussman and Abene, Julien, and Lindsay.

12. ———, composer. *Evanesence*. Recorded September 1992. Enja ENJ-80482, 1994. CD.

Evanesence is Maria Schneider's first studio album. The audio will be paired with the scores for this album, the audio allowing us to hear Schneider's techniques in context. The voicing techniques Schneider employs here will be useful to compare to later recordings and will likely prove crucial in establishing any changes in her techniques over time. As with Schneider's

other recordings, the techniques on display here will be juxtaposed with the frameworks provided by Wright, Sussman and Abene, Julien, and Lindsay.