University of Toronto
Jazz Arranging JMU317Y

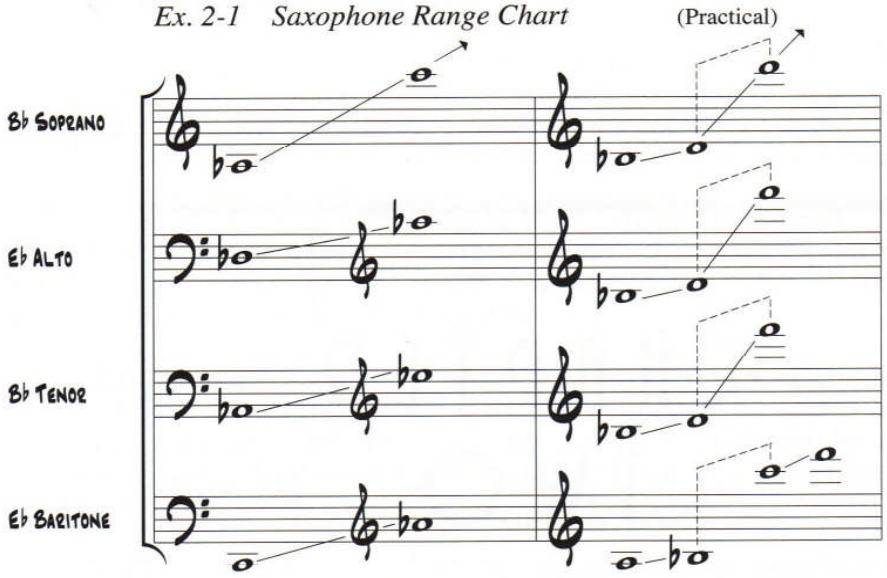
Week 1 "Set-up" Handouts

The following pages contain information on instrument ranges, terms, score set-up and tips for establishing good fundamentals as a jazz arranger.

Excerpts are from Sammy Nestico's "The Complete Arranger" and "A Guide to Jazz Composition and Arranging" by Jerry Coker.

SAXOPHONES

Ex. 2-1 Saxophone Range Chart (Practical)



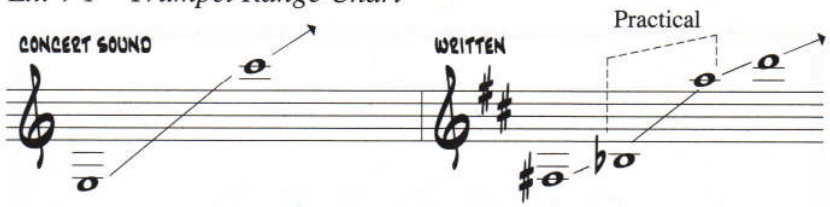
Saxophones have a remarkable flexibility. They can play rapid passages and sustained phrases equally well, and are the tonal center of the jazz ensemble, mixing ably with everyone. Since they have fewer endurance problems, they can be used more extensively than other sections. They are very responsive instruments that can play velvety ballads or explosive jazz solos.

The B♭ soprano saxophone is experiencing more exposure both in the big band and studio sessions. Its upper register is quite brilliant, and while it is sometimes used to lead the sax section, it functions primarily as a solo instrument.

In a warm setting, a relaxed alto solo is a good choice of color.

TRUMPET

Ex. 4-1 Trumpet Range Chart



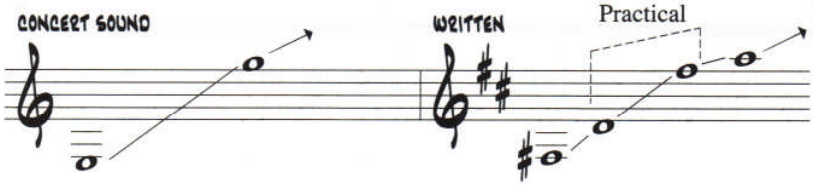
The trumpet is pitched in B♭ and written a whole step higher than it sounds. It has a most dynamic and penetrating tone, whether it is used as a solo instrument, in a section, in prime unison, in octaves (two in the upper register and two an octave lower) or in place at the top of the entire brass section. In combination with other instruments, it is equally effective playing in unison with an alto sax or electric guitar, or in octaves with trombone or tenor sax. It is the most flexible instrument in th brass family, and when played by a good performer, the trumpet seems to inspire confidence, making it reputedly the "president" of the brass section.

By reserving sustained passages for the instruments best equipped to handle them, trumpet players are fresh when you really need their dramatic input. Another caution: Higher isn't better!

Your attention is drawn to the many written and recorded examples on the use of the trumpet shown throughout this book.

FLUGELHORN

Ex. 4-2 Flugelhorn Range Chart



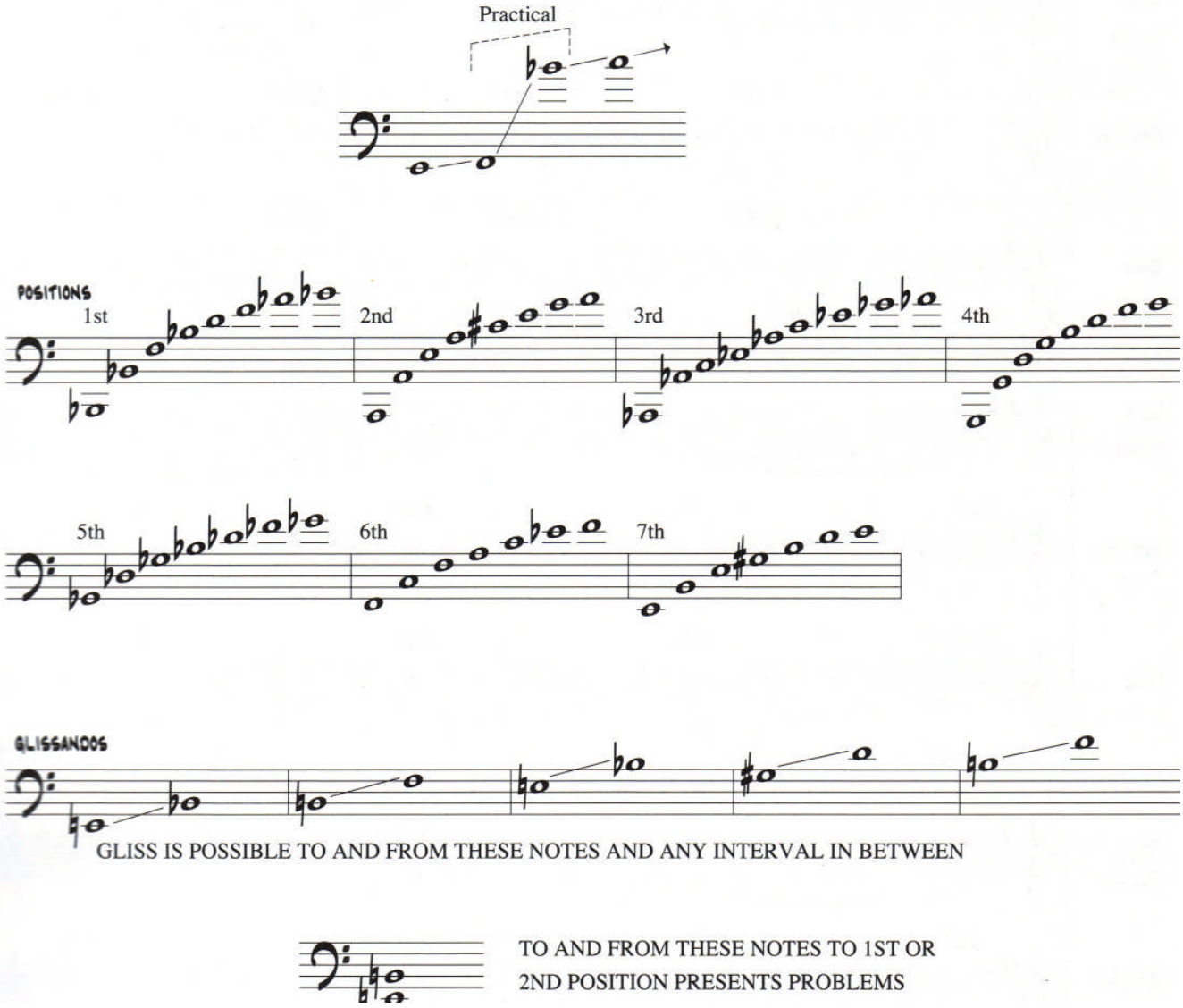
The flugelhorn is written exactly like the trumpet. It has a more limited range, but its mellow sound is often a welcome contrast to the brilliance of the trumpet. The construction of the flugelhorn makes it best suited as a solo instrument, in unison with other flugels, or at the top of a quiet brass section. To preserve its individuality, it shouldn't be used as a substitute for trumpet, but for its own unique merits.

The introduction of *Satin 'n Glass* clearly highlights the difference in timbre between trumpet and flugelhorn. Framed in six-part harmony, seven brass lead the way, play thematic material with a somewhat "cold" sound. The ice starts to melt in bar 6 with the use of F13(♭9) and B♭+7(♯9) chords, then the flugel takes over with a sensitive solo that encompasses the full range of the instrument.

TROMBONE

The trombone is a tenor pitched, non-transposing instrument, written in bass clef. It has seven positions, each one producing a harmonic series. In looking over the chart below, you can see how difficult it is for a performer to go quickly from the low sixth and seventh positions (low E and low B) to the first or second position – avoid figures exchanging these notes. They are absolutely impossible in a bright tempo.

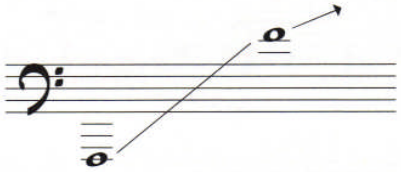
Ex. 4-5 Trombone Range, Position & Glissando Charts



BASS TROMBONE

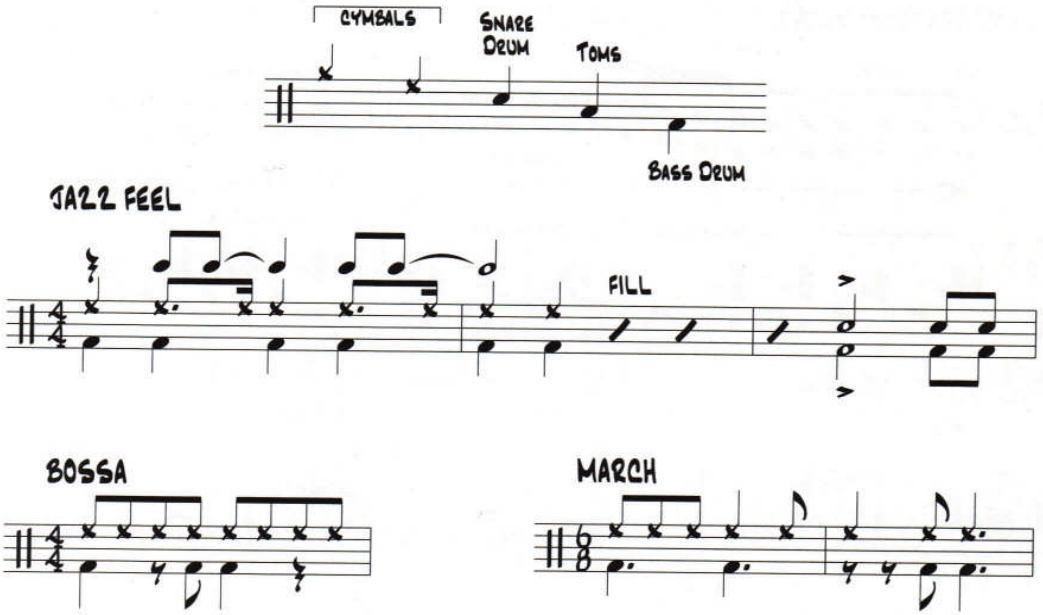
A valuable asset to any orchestra, the bass trombone is capable of playing the notes between the lowest note of the tenor trombone (low E) down to the bottom pedal B♭. It lends strength and depth to the bottom of a trombone choir (à la Stan Kenton) and adds a firm foundation to the orchestra.

Ex. 4-9 Bass Trombone Range Chart



DRUMS

Ex. 5-7 Drum Notation Chart



The drummer's traps consist of a bass drum, snare drum, hi-hat, and some tom-toms and cymbals of various sizes. Drums are the true conductors of the band, keeping everything in its rightful place and moving everyone together.

A legend in the upper left hand corner of the drum part tells the tempo and style that the piece requires (remember, the drummer depends on "feel" more than anything else).

The drum part is written on a single staff in the bass clef. It should very simply keep the drummer informed of what the band is doing at all times. This can be a word every eight bars, or a figure that the band is playing. This guide doesn't signify that you want him to "catch" everything, but informs him where the prime focus is so he can relate accordingly.

Keep it simple! A simple part allows the drummer freedom to provide his own fills and effects where appropriate. When important rhythmic figures are played by the band, the drum part should be written out to reinforce them. Attention given to the drum part in advance will reap significant rewards in performance.