

# The Complete Arranger Sammy Nestico

**The complete arranger Sammy Nestico** is a name that resonates deeply within the world of jazz and big band music. Renowned for his exceptional arranging skills, innovative compositions, and significant influence on jazz orchestration, Sammy Nestico's legacy continues to inspire musicians and enthusiasts alike. This article provides an in-depth look into the life, career, musical style, and enduring impact of this legendary arranger.

## Early Life and Musical Beginnings

### Roots and Musical Education

Sammy Nestico was born on June 29, 1924, in Ohio. Growing up in a musical family, he was exposed to various genres of music from a young age. His early fascination with jazz and big band music led him to pursue formal education in music. Nestico attended the University of North Texas, where he studied music and honed his skills in composition and arrangement.

### Initial Career Steps

After completing his education, Nestico began working as a trombonist and arranger. His early gigs included performances with local bands, which provided him with valuable experience and exposure to different styles of jazz and big band arrangements. These formative years laid the groundwork for his future success as a prominent arranger.

# **Career Highlights and Contributions**

## **Work with Big Bands and Orchestras**

Sammy Nestico's career took a significant leap when he became the chief arranger for the Count Basie Orchestra in the 1960s. His arrangements for the orchestra are considered some of the finest in jazz history, characterized by their sophistication, swing, and clarity. Nestico's work with the Basie band helped redefine the sound of big band jazz during that era. Beyond Count Basie, Nestico collaborated with numerous other prominent artists and ensembles, including:

1. Frank Sinatra
2. Milton Berle
3. Barbra Streisand
4. Rob McConnell's Boss Brass
5. The United States Air Force Band

His versatility allowed him to adapt his arrangements across various styles, from traditional jazz to pop and commercial music.

## **Teaching and Mentorship**

In addition to his work as an arranger, Sammy Nestico dedicated part of his career to education. He served as a professor at the University of North Texas, mentoring aspiring arrangers and composers. His teaching emphasized the importance of clarity, swing feel, and harmonic sophistication, which he mastered and incorporated into his arrangements.

# **Musical Style and Techniques**

## **Distinctive Arranging Style**

Sammy Nestico's arrangements are renowned for their:

1. Clarity and balance among sections
2. Rich harmonic textures
3. Strong rhythmic drive
4. Creative voicings and orchestrations

He had a knack for crafting arrangements that were both intricate and accessible, making them suitable for both professional jazz orchestras and student ensembles.

## **Innovative Use of Harmony and Voicing**

Nestico's harmonic language often featured lush voicings, interesting chord substitutions, and inventive orchestrations that added depth and color without sacrificing swing feel. His mastery of balancing brass, woodwinds, and rhythm sections is considered a benchmark in jazz arranging.

## **Emphasis on Swing and Groove**

A hallmark of Nestico's style is his ability to instill a natural swing into his arrangements. His sense of groove and timing helped big bands sound lively and engaging, emphasizing the importance of feel in jazz performance.

# **Legacy and Influence**

## **Impact on Jazz and Big Band Music**

Sammy Nestico's arrangements have become standard repertoire for big bands worldwide. His work with the Count Basie Orchestra set a high standard for jazz arranging, influencing countless arrangers and composers. His music continues to be performed and recorded, demonstrating its timeless appeal.

## **Recognition and Awards**

Throughout his career, Nestico received numerous accolades, including:

1. DownBeat Magazine awards
2. Jazz education honors
3. Lifetime achievement recognitions

His contributions have been celebrated both for their artistic excellence and educational value.

## **Enduring Influence**

Many contemporary arrangers cite Sammy Nestico as a primary influence, particularly in the realm of big band jazz. His approach to arrangement—marked by clarity, swing, and harmonic richness—serves as a model for students and professionals alike.

## Notable Works and Recordings

While many of Nestico's arrangements are performed by various ensembles, some compositions and arrangements stand out:

1. "Li'l Darlin'" — A signature piece for the Count Basie Orchestra, showcasing his mastery of slow swing ballads
2. "The Kid from Red Bank" — An energetic and melodic arrangement
3. "Fawncy" — Demonstrating complex harmonies in a lively context

In addition, his albums as a bandleader and arranger have been critically acclaimed, often featuring his own compositions and innovative arrangements.

## Conclusion

The complete arranger Sammy Nestico represents a pinnacle of jazz orchestration, blending technical mastery with artistic sensitivity. His work has left an indelible mark on the genre, inspiring generations of musicians and arrangers. Whether through his legendary arrangements for the Count Basie Orchestra or his influential teaching career, Sammy Nestico's contributions continue to shape the landscape of jazz and big band music. His legacy is a testament to the power of musical innovation grounded in tradition and craftsmanship, ensuring his place in the pantheon of jazz greats for decades to come.

The Complete Arranger Sammy Nestico: A Mastermind of Big Band Jazz **Sammy Nestico** stands as one of the most influential and prolific figures in the history of jazz arranging, particularly within the realm of big band music. His contributions have not only shaped the sound of countless ensembles but have also elevated the artistry of jazz arranging to new heights. With a career spanning over five decades, Nestico's work is

characterized by its inventive harmony, precise orchestration, and melodic sophistication, making him a revered figure among jazz musicians, students, and aficionados alike.

## **Early Life and Musical Foundations**

### **Childhood and Musical Beginnings**

Samuel Louis Nestico was born on May 31, 1924, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Growing up in a city with a rich jazz and swing tradition, Nestico was exposed to music early in life. His initial musical education was rooted in classical piano, which provided a solid foundation in harmony and musical structure. This classical training would later inform his approach to jazz arranging, allowing him to blend sophistication with accessibility.

### **Musical Influences**

Nestico's early influences ranged from big band legends such as Count Basie and Duke Ellington to jazz arrangers like Gil Evans and Quincy Jones. The swing era's emphasis on strong rhythm and ensemble cohesion left an indelible mark on his style. Additionally, his exposure to classical composers like Ravel and Stravinsky contributed to his mastery of orchestration and harmonic development.

## **Career Development and Key Milestones**

### **Military Service and Introduction to Arranging**

During World War II, Nestico served in the U.S. Army, where he was part of a military band. This experience was pivotal, as it provided him with practical arranging opportunities and a platform to hone his skills. It was during this period that he began to develop his distinctive approach to arranging for large ensembles.

## **Post-War Career and The Count Basie Orchestra**

After the war, Nestico's reputation as an arranger grew. His big break came when he joined the Count Basie Orchestra in the late 1950s. Serving as the chief arranger for the band, Nestico crafted arrangements that became staples of the Basie sound. His work with Basie is often regarded as some of the most enduring and influential in jazz history.

## **Independent Arranging and Education**

Following his tenure with Basie, Nestico pursued a prolific career as an independent arranger, working with numerous big bands, including the U.S. Air Force Academy Band, the Memphis State University Jazz Ensemble, and many professional jazz orchestras. His reputation for clarity, swing, and inventive voicings made him a sought-after arranger and educator.

## **The Signature Style of Sammy Nestico**

### **Orchestration and Voicing Techniques**

Nestico's arranging style is characterized by its impeccable voicing techniques. He was known for his ability to write seamless transitions between sections, balancing harmony and texture. His voicings often employed close harmony, counterpoint, and inventive use of the middle voices to create a full, rich sound without overcrowding the ensemble. Key features include: - Clear melodic lines complemented by harmonic support. - Use of block chords with subtle inner voice movement. - Innovative use of the saxophone and brass sections to create dynamic textures.

## **Harmonic Language and Melodic Content**

Nestico's harmonic language combines traditional jazz harmony with classical influences. His progressions were often sophisticated yet accessible, making his arrangements appealing to both musicians and audiences. Melodically, he favored memorable, singable lines that often served as the centerpiece of his arrangements.

## **Rhythmic Vitality and Swing Feel**

A hallmark of Nestico's work is his mastery of swing and rhythmic drive. His arrangements often feature crisp articulations, accented hits, and syncopated figures that propel the music forward. The rhythm section in his arrangements is meticulously crafted to support and enhance the ensemble's groove, emphasizing the swing feel that is central to jazz.

## **Notable Arrangements and Recordings**

### **Count Basie Collaborations**

Nestico's work with Count Basie produced some of the most celebrated arrangements in jazz. Notable pieces include: - "Blue and Sentimental" - "Teddy the Toad" - "April in Paris" (not the famous duet, but a Nestico arrangement for big band) These arrangements exemplify Nestico's ability to craft lively, swinging charts that highlight Basie's band strengths.

### **Other Significant Works**

Beyond Basie, Nestico arranged for: - The U.S. Air Force Academy Band, producing numerous educational and concert arrangements. - The jazz albums of artists like Buddy Rich and Maynard Ferguson. - Educational



publications and jazz method books, which continue to influence jazz education.

## **Legacy Recordings and Reissues**

Many of Nestico's arrangements have been preserved through recordings, compilations, and sheet music publications. His charts are frequently performed by university jazz ensembles and professional bands, testifying to their enduring popularity and pedagogical value.

## **Educational Contributions and Influence**

### **Teaching and Mentorship**

Nestico dedicated much of his later career to education, serving as a professor and clinician. His teaching emphasized the importance of clarity, swing, and harmonic understanding. Many aspiring arrangers credit him with shaping their approach to big band writing.

### **Publications and Method Books**

He authored several influential books on jazz arranging, including "The Sammy Nestico Big Band Arranging Book," which offers insights into his techniques and philosophy. These resources are widely used in jazz programs worldwide.

### **Influence on Future Generations**

Nestico's style has influenced countless arrangers and composers, many of whom have adopted his principles of craftsmanship and musicality. His emphasis on musicality over complexity has made his work accessible

while maintaining artistic integrity.

## **Recognition and Awards**

Throughout his career, Sammy Nestico received numerous accolades, including: - The National Endowment for the Arts Jazz Masters Award (2015) - Multiple DownBeat Magazine awards - Recognition from jazz societies and educational institutions for his contributions to jazz education and arranging His legacy is cemented not only through his recordings but also through the countless students and musicians he mentored.

## **Legacy and Continued Relevance**

### **Enduring Influence**

Nestico's arrangements remain staples in the repertoire of jazz ensembles worldwide. His ability to combine sophistication with accessibility ensures his music continues to inspire new generations of musicians.

### **Modern Performances and Repertoire**

Many contemporary big bands and university ensembles regularly perform his charts, keeping his style alive. His arrangements serve as excellent learning tools for students learning jazz orchestration and arranging.

### **Impact on Jazz Arranging Philosophy**

Nestico's approach underscores the importance of musical clarity, swing feel, and emotional expressiveness. His work exemplifies how technical mastery can serve musical expression, setting a standard for jazz arrangers.

## Conclusion: The Complete Legacy of Sammy Nestico

Sammy Nestico's contributions to jazz arranging are monumental. His arrangements are characterized by their impeccable craftsmanship, swinging vitality, and melodic clarity. As a composer, orchestrator, educator, and mentor, Nestico has profoundly influenced the sound of big band jazz and the approach of countless musicians. His work exemplifies the art of balancing technical skill with musicality, ensuring his legacy endures well beyond his years. For anyone interested in jazz arrangement, studying Sammy Nestico's repertoire offers a masterclass in musical excellence, innovation, and the timeless appeal of swing-era sophistication.

## Questions & Answers About the complete arranger sammy nestico

| No | Question                                                                                | Answer                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1  | What makes 'The Complete Arranger' by Sammy Nestico a must-have for jazz musicians?     | 'The Complete Arranger' offers comprehensive insights into Sammy Nestico's arranging techniques, featuring detailed examples and arrangements that are essential for jazz musicians and arrangers looking to understand his iconic style.              |
| 2  | How has Sammy Nestico influenced modern jazz arranging through 'The Complete Arranger'? | Nestico's book provides foundational principles and innovative arranging strategies that have shaped contemporary jazz arrangements, making it a key resource for students and professionals aiming to emulate his sophisticated yet accessible style. |
| 3  | What topics are covered in 'The Complete Arranger' by Sammy Nestico?                    | The book covers a wide range of topics including voicing, scoring techniques, harmony, orchestration, and practical tips for arranging big band jazz, illustrated with numerous examples from Nestico's own work.                                      |

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|---|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 4 | Is 'The Complete Arranger' suitable for beginners or advanced musicians?         | 'The Complete Arranger' is suitable for both beginners and advanced musicians; it provides fundamental concepts for newcomers while also offering advanced insights and detailed examples for experienced arrangers seeking to refine their craft. |
| 5 | Where can I find 'The Complete Arranger' by Sammy Nestico for purchase or study? | You can find 'The Complete Arranger' on major online bookstores, music stores, and digital platforms such as Amazon, Sheet Music Plus, or specialized jazz and music education retailers.                                                          |

Sammy Nestico, Big Band Arrangements, Jazz Arranger, Swing Music, Jazz Big Band, Music Composition, Jazz Arrangements, Swing Era, Brass Arrangements, Jazz Composer