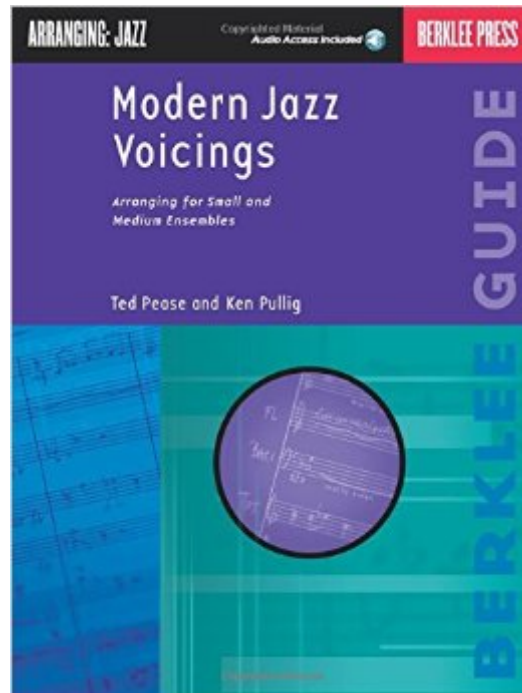


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# Modern Jazz Voicings: Arranging For Small And Medium Ensembles



## Synopsis

(Berklee Guide). The definitive text used for the time-honored Chord Scales course at Berklee College of Music, this book concentrates on scoring for every possible ensemble combination and teaches performers and arrangers how to add color, character and sophistication to chord voicings. Topics covered include: selecting appropriate harmonic tensions, understanding jazz harmony, overcoming harmonic ambiguity, experimenting with unusual combinations and non-traditional alignments, and many more. The accompanying CD includes performance examples of several different arranging techniques. "A no-nonsense, meat and potatoes source of basic and not-so-basic information about everything relating to jazz writing covers several courses worth of information." Kenny Werner Pianist, Composer and Author of Effortless Mastery

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This book is absolutely excellent. Like other Berklee Press books, it is easy-to-understand, and it offers exercises after each exercise to ensure that the lessons are etched in your brain through hands-on application. This book demystifies a lot concerning voicings and chord scale theory, and I dare say that this and "Reharmonization Techniques" by Randy Felts should be the first books one reads before they read other fine arranging books by Sebesky, Riddle, Mancini and Grove. Many of those books focus more on style, with little if any explanation of jazz/chord theory. Once you get the essentials from this book, you'll gain way more from the other books. This book starts with a lesson on chord theory, then simple 4 and 5 part voicings, as well as non-chord tone reharmonization. It

then proceeds to tell you exactly how to write voicings in fourths, clusters, and upper-structure triads. In addition, it comes with a CD with recorded examples from each chapter of the book, so you can hear the subtle differences between the various voicings and effects. This book is amazing! One word of advice (speaking from my own initial misunderstanding): when reading the early chapter detailing "avoid notes", be sure to absorb and understand it as much as possible - it is the foundation upon which the later chapters on specialized voicings are built upon. This is the only part of the book where a decent grasp of jazz chord construction and tensions MAY be needed. In a nutshell, a note is avoided because: a.) It creates a nasty, dissonant interval with an essential chord tone, or b.) It creates an interval with an essential chord tone that is uncharacteristic of that chord type (ie. a tritone in a Major 7th chord, etc.)

The material presented is great, and will prove helpful in my study of arranging. I did have one problem with the book however. In the introduction it states, "Because this book is intended for an expanded audience beyond students enrolled at Berklee, it includes substantial amounts of new text, many new musical examples, solutions to exercises and an accompanying CD." Yes, it's all there except the solutions to the exercises and I am finding that frustrating. I contacted the publisher and got this reply: Our Senior Editor clarified that the author meant the exercises begin with a measure of answers filled in for the student. They will clarify the "solutions to exercises" mention in the next printing of the book. My apologies for any confusion this may have caused you. Anyways, I found this aspect frustrating and a hinderance to my getting the full benefit of this book.

I've done a ton of arranging and composing for concert bands, percussion ensembles, and other small ensembles, but jazz is certainly a language very unique to itself unlike anything you likely were taught in college C.P.E. theory or arranging classes. The concepts of basic, effective jazz arranging are clearly laid out even for someone with only a fair jazz background. Super-basic instrument ranges and transpositions are explained at the front, quickly moving to common harmonic structures, various Drop- voicings, and other concepts that make a jazz tune sound like jazz and not like Bach (hah!). The supplemental CD is a GREAT resource, as it gives you live recordings of real instruments (no MIDI or synth used) playing many of the examples so you can hear what a Drop-2 Double Lead 8vb sounds like in comparison to a Drop-2+4 Double Lead 8va. I've already used the guidelines laid out in this book to arrange a few charts from my real book, and even the MIDI playback I have for now sounds awesome. Fantastic resource especially for the price. I already know it will get quite a workout in the near future.

"Modern Jazz Voicing" answers the fundamental question: How do you get that modern jazz sound? Divided into 2 separate sections, Part I provides the foundation for understanding basic techniques, voicings, and chord scales. Part II discusses the use of fourths, clusters, triads, and six-parts. At the end of each chapter are a series of exercises used to reinforce and demonstrate the techniques of that chapter. The flexibility I have found in being able to apply these techniques in different situations has greatly improved my capabilities. I strongly recommend this book to anyone seeking to increase their arranging capabilities.

Modern Jazz Voicings assumes familiarity with terms such as nondiatonic and chromatic. There seems to be an assumption underlying the text that the reader has an instructor or is a college-level musician. This is, for example, is apparent in Chapter 3 Basic Voicings, which explains the important concept of five-part voicings. The book's explanation of drop voicing could have been made clearer. In fact, I found myself referring to Jazz Composition and Arranging in the Digital Age (I purchased both books together) to clarify and understand several terms and concepts discussed. So, if you are uncomfortable with your formal musical education or do not have an instructor with a degree in music, Modern Jazz Voicings may not be the best book for you. You'd probably be better off with a more detailed book like Jazz Composition and Arranging in the Digital Age (Oxford University Press), which does take the time and the paper to explain what's going on. This being said, the book does deliver on its title.

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