

ABSTRACT

Title of Document: THE BIRTH OF JERU: GERRY MULLIGAN'S
EARLY COMPOSING/ARRANGING
CAREER (1945-1953)

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Gerry Mulligan (1927-1996) is undoubtedly the most celebrated baritone saxophonist of all time. For decades, both popular and critics' polls consistently recognized him as the best on his instrument. He took first place for forty-three consecutive years (1953-1995) in *Downbeat's* Readers' Poll for best baritone saxophonist, and his reviews by critics and fellow performers were, for the most part, laudatory. He performed with such jazz icons as Chet Baker, Dave Brubeck, Miles Davis, Duke Ellington, Dizzy Gillespie, Thelonious Monk, and Ben Webster.

Perhaps as a consequence of this recognition as a performer, Gerry Mulligan's contributions as a composer and arranger have been overshadowed and therefore less recognized. This is despite the importance of his writing and its influence on the

history of modern jazz orchestration. It was as a composer/arranger that he first made his mark, and he would preoccupy himself with writing throughout most of his career.

The purpose of this dissertation is to study the history of Gerry Mulligan's composing/arranging career starting with his earliest professional writing projects as a teenager (ca 1945) and ending with the dissolution of his first pianoless quartet with Chet Baker (1953). To date, despite the availability of a huge collection of primary sources that Franca Mulligan, Gerry's widow, has donated to the Library of Congress, no scholarly study has been undertaken to examine this material, particularly in the context of Mulligan's development as composer/arranger. A particularly invaluable source has been made available to me for this project through special permission by Mrs. Mulligan. In 1995, Gerry Mulligan recorded his oral history by way of a series of interviews. The memoirs address such topics as his childhood; his associations with Gil Evans, Miles Davis, Charlie Parker, Thelonious Monk, and Gene Krupa; his pianoless quartet with Chet Baker; his ideas about counterpoint; and his heroin addiction.

The dissertation draws particular attention to Mulligan's unique creative and intellectual processes, their context in his collaboration with other musicians, their effect on the evolution of his style throughout his early career, and their influence on other modern jazz composer/arrangers.

THE BIRTH OF JERU:
GERRY MULLIGAN'S EARLY COMPOSING/ARRANGING CAREER
(1945-1953)

By

Richard Samuel Fine

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
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Preface

In the spring of 2004, as a graduate student at the Peabody Conservatory, I began visiting the Performing Arts Reading Room of the Library of Congress to make use of the Aaron Copland Collection in support of my master's thesis research. On my first visit to the Library, as I turned the corner to enter the foyer to the Reading Room, an object came into view that that stopped me in my tracks. In the center of the room, enclosed in a glass case, stood Gerry Mulligan's gold-plated Conn baritone saxophone, the instrument he played in public performances the last decade of his life. I learned that in 1999, this room had become an exhibition of the life and works of Mulligan thanks to the generosity of his widow, Franca R. Mulligan. Being a life-long admirer of Mulligan and a baritone saxophonist myself, I reveled in the objects that were displayed in cases and on the walls around the room. The exhibition featured numerous items drawn from the Library's Gerry Mulligan Collection (also donated by Mrs. Mulligan), including photographs, manuscripts, scores, record album covers, the Grammy award he won for his album *Walk on the Water* (1980), and miscellaneous artifacts such as reeds, mouthpieces, and ligatures. On each subsequent visit to the Library for my Copland research, I doubt whether I walked through that foyer once without stopping to examine something in the Mulligan exhibition that I hadn't noticed before.

When I became a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Maryland School of Music in 2008, I began investigating the feasibility of using the Library of Congress's Gerry Mulligan Collection as the basis for my dissertation. The Collection consists of almost 1500 items including scores, lead sheets, sketches, individual parts,

photographs, sound recordings, correspondence, and other writings. In the process of my investigation, I learned that the Collection's website features a section entitled "Jeru: In the Words of Gerry Mulligan, an Aural Autobiography." It consists of a series of hyperlinked sound recordings of Mulligan speaking on such topics as his childhood; his pianoless quartet; his drug addiction; his approach to counterpoint; and his relationship with other jazz musicians, including Gil Evans, Miles Davis, Charlie Parker, Chet Baker, and Thelonious Monk. I also learned that these recordings were excerpted from a much larger oral history that Mulligan had produced during various sessions in 1995, just months before he died.

I requested access to the entire oral history and was referred to the Mulligan Publishing Company, Inc. of Darien, Connecticut. To my delight, when I called the company's offices, Franca Mulligan answered the phone. After I introduced myself, she was happy to share with me little-known facts about Gerry—for example, that he was a talented painter, and that he and actress Judy Holliday were a songwriting team who even composed a musical theater work entitled *Happy Birthday*. This was the first of a series of pleasurable communications between Mrs. Mulligan and me that eventually led to an agreement whereby she granted me access to the entire twenty-six hours of the oral history to be used solely for my dissertation research. Plunging headlong into this invaluable primary source, I soon uncovered a personal chronicle that educated me, enlightened me, entertained me, charmed me, and at times even dismayed me. In the process of virtually living with the oral history over the next two years, I eventually began to feel as if I personally knew Gerry, and could actually

imagine being there as his life unfolded. As a result, this project became quite personally rewarding for me.

While this dissertation is based largely on the contents of the oral history, it focuses on only one aspect of Mulligan's career, his composing and arranging during an eight-year period. But the oral history is potentially a valuable source for original research on numerous additional topics about Gerry Mulligan's world. It is my hope that my work encourages others to pursue these opportunities.

Acknowledgements

Without the support and assistance of numerous individuals, the completion of this dissertation would not have been possible. I wish to thank my advisor, Dr. Richard Wexler, who has given generously of his time and attention. He has interacted vigorously with me since the beginning of the project, guiding me, encouraging me, and providing meticulous readings of each and every draft. His enthusiasm for my topic has given me the confidence to ambitiously pursue this project to its completion. I also am grateful to Professors Robert Gibson, Richard King, Charles Rutherford, and Chris Vadala, who have agreed to serve on my dissertation committee.

I am especially thankful to Franca Mulligan, who graciously allowed me to use Gerry's personal recorded memoirs, my most important source. I have been inspired by Franca's undying devotion to Gerry's memory and her enthusiasm for my project. I would also like to thank Larry Appelbaum and Tom Barrick of the Music Division of the Library of Congress who helped facilitate my research by guiding me through the Gerry Mulligan Collection. Whenever I had any questions about the Collection, I could always count on Larry and/or Tom's prompt response.

I want to recognize the tremendous effort of Erin Cook, who transcribed for me all twenty-six hours of Gerry Mulligan's oral history. The result was an extremely useful 500-page searchable document. A special thanks goes to my son Jonathan Fine who set up his Apple PowerMac G5 in my office and taught me how to use Final Cut Pro to convert and edit the original oral history DAT tapes to a digital format suitable for CD generation. I would also like to express my gratitude to Dr.

Joseph Briscuso, former Towson University saxophone professor, who, when I was an undergraduate student concentrating on alto saxophone, persuaded me to switch to baritone; and Dr. Mark Katz, my master's thesis advisor at Peabody Conservatory, who convinced me that it was perfectly acceptable for musicologists to write about jazz.

I want to thank all of my friends and relatives who encouraged me throughout the entire effort. Finally, I want to express my deepest appreciation to my wife Andrea, who is the most loving and supportive person I know. Over the past eleven years, she has read every single word of every paper I have written. Her editing has been superb, and she has never failed to give me honest feedback. Her faith in me has been a true inspiration, without which I could not have finished this project.

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Introduction

Gerry Mulligan (1927-1996) is undoubtedly the most celebrated baritone saxophonist of all time. For decades, both popular and critics' polls consistently recognized him as the best on his instrument. He took first place for forty-three consecutive years (1953-1995) in *Downbeat's* Readers' Poll for best baritone saxophonist, and his reviews by critics and fellow performers were, for the most part, laudatory. He performed with such jazz icons as Chet Baker, Dave Brubeck, Miles Davis, Duke Ellington, Dizzy Gillespie, Thelonious Monk, and Ben Webster. For the 1958 Newport Jazz Festival, Ellington and Billy Strayhorn composed a duet jazz concerto, "Prima Bara Dubla," to showcase the relative strengths of Mulligan and Ellington's longtime baritone player, Harry Carney. Mulligan's pianoless quartet, his early fifties performance collaboration with Baker at the Los Angeles lounge the Haig, was instrumental in the birth of the West Coast Jazz movement. Trumpeter Rex Stewart, who in the company of Mulligan, Ben Webster, Lester Young, Coleman Hawkins, and others, appeared with Billie Holiday on the 1957 CBS special *The Sound of Jazz*, compared the first time he heard Mulligan with the first time he heard Louis Armstrong: "I felt a kinship with him right away. If a man doesn't feel him, he must be dead."¹

Perhaps as a consequence of this recognition as a performer, Gerry Mulligan's contributions as a composer and arranger have been overshadowed and therefore less recognized. This is despite the importance of his writing and its influence on the

¹ Gary Giddins, *Visions of Jazz* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 356.

history of modern jazz orchestration. It was as a writer that Mulligan gained his earliest recognition. At age seventeen, he began arranging for Johnny Warrington, the leader of the WCAU (Philadelphia) radio band. Within a year he dropped out of high school and went on the road with Tommy Tucker, who hired him to write three ballad or two jump arrangements (including parts) per week in exchange for one hundred dollars. While on a six-week engagement at the Chicago Stevens Hotel, the impressionable young arranger witnessed, for the first time, live performances by the bands of Earl Hines and Billy Eckstine with Dizzy Gillespie playing trumpet. He spent his free time listening to the hottest bands like these so that he could incorporate the techniques he learned from them into his own arrangements and thereby elevate Tucker's style from what others referred to as "mickey-mouse."²

After three months, Tucker released Mulligan, and he returned to Philadelphia to begin writing and playing for Elliot Lawrence, who was now the band leader at WCAU. Mulligan worked on and off for Lawrence until the early fifties. In 1945, the Lawrence Orchestra, with Mulligan playing tenor saxophone, performed in a concert at Philadelphia's Academy of Music that also featured Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, and Sarah Vaughan. This began an association with Parker, who later commissioned Mulligan to write several arrangements for his acclaimed string ensemble. At age nineteen, Mulligan, now in New York, wrote for Gene Krupa's big band, and his 1946 composition "Disc Jockey Jump" for Krupa is one of the earliest big-band pieces to integrate the bebop idiom.

² Jerome Klinkowitz, *Listen: Gerry Mulligan, An Aural Narrative in Jazz* (New York: Schirmer, 1991), 13.

In 1947, through an association with Gil Evans, Mulligan wrote and played baritone sax for the Claude Thornhill Orchestra. Klinkowitz notes that “his ear for the new phraseology of bop and feel for its intellectually impertinent rhythms and complex melodies made Mulligan the ideal new talent for Thornhill.”³ Also through Evans, Mulligan met Miles Davis, which led to the formation of a nine-piece ensemble, originally intended as a rehearsal band, and its subsequent recording of twelve songs during three sessions for Capitol Records in 1949 and 1950. These songs would later be released as the acclaimed compilation LP album, *The Birth of the Cool*. Mulligan wrote seven of the Capitol session arrangements, including three for his original compositions: “Jeru,” “Rocker,” and “Venus DeMilo.” His intention was to replicate the Thornhill sound with a much smaller ensemble. J. Bradford Robinson describes his writing for this band as being characterized by “intricate inner parts, careful balancing of timbres, low dynamics, and light swing.”⁴ While today *The Birth of the Cool* is considered one of the most influential albums of modern jazz, it was less appreciated at the time of its release.

In 1952, out of work and addicted to heroin, Mulligan and his girlfriend Gail Madden hitchhiked to California. Madden’s friendship with arranger Bob Graettinger led to an engagement composing and arranging for the Stan Kenton Orchestra. This resulted in several influential works, including “Young Blood,” “Limelight,” “Swinghouse,” and “Walkin’ Shoes,” that incorporate such innovative compositional techniques as counterpoint, polymeter, and asymmetric phrasing. He then went on to

³ Ibid., 28.

⁴ J. Bradford Robinson, “Mulligan, Gerry,” In *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/19340> (accessed July 2, 2010).

experiment with a ten-piece band that he formed. The instrumentation for this ensemble was based on the *Birth of the Cool* configuration except that a second trumpet and sectional baritone saxophone were added and the piano was excluded.

For most of the rest of the fifties, Mulligan worked primarily in smaller groups, most notably his pianoless quartets featuring him with Chet Baker (trumpet) at first, and subsequently with Jon Eardley (trumpet), Bob Brookmeyer (valve trombone), and Art Farmer (trumpet). He briefly organized a conventional big band in 1957 but “abandoned it when he became dissatisfied with its potential for new sounds and ideas.”⁵ Four Mulligan originals emerged from the sessions with this band: “Thruway,” “Motel,” “Mullenum,” and a new arrangement of “All the Things You Are.” In 1960, he formed his “Concert Jazz Band” as a purely musical big band – no dance music and no vocals. The CJB’s instrumentation, as configured by Mulligan and Brookmeyer, was somewhat unconventional: three trumpets, valve trombone (Brookmeyer), slide trombone, bass trombone, solo baritone (Mulligan), clarinet (doubling on alto saxophone), alto (doubling on flute), tenor saxophone and section baritone (doubling on bass clarinet). The rhythm section, once again pianoless, contained only bass and drums. While most of the CJB’s arrangements were commissioned by Mulligan from others, they all generally reflect his style. With the backing of Norman Granz of Verve Records, the CJB debuted in 1960, toured the United States and Europe, and eventually issued five albums before its dissolution in 1965. It was re-formed in 1978 and toured occasionally through the eighties.

⁵ Klinkowitz, 32.

The Age of Steam (1971) represents Mulligan's first fusion jazz creative output. For this album, the wind instrumentation and arranging style were similar to that of the Concert Jazz Band, but it is the rhythm section instrumentation and writing that differs greatly. Where the CJB rhythm section consisted of only bass and drums allowing the band to swing and play rather loose, the rhythm section for *The Age of Steam* sessions consisted of six instruments: piano, bass, drums, guitar, vibraphone, and percussion. Mulligan makes the writing for this full blown section an integral part of the arrangements. As he says, "They are an ensemble unto themselves. The trick is to make everything relate, to make all of the elements into one whole. In fact I was listening to some of my old Concert Band recordings the other day and was quite surprised at the lack of rhythm and push."⁶ On the next big band album, the Grammy Award-winning *Walk On The Water* (1980), he expanded the brass to nine pieces and used a more traditional jazz rhythm section: piano, bass, and drums.

So, notwithstanding Mulligan's accolades as a baritone saxophonist, it was as a composer/arranger that he first made his mark, and he was preoccupied with arranging throughout most of his career. He explains, "I'll always think as an arranger. Each band represents another writing approach."⁷

The purpose of this dissertation is to study the history of Gerry Mulligan's composing/arranging career starting with his earliest professional writing projects as a

⁶ Michael Cuscuna, Liner notes to *Gerry Mulligan: The Age of Steam*, Hal Leonard 2004, DVD & CD.

⁷ Gerry Mulligan, Unpublished oral history, recorded at the home of Gerry and Franca Mulligan (Darien, Connecticut) in February, March, and July 1995. Permission granted by Franca R. Mulligan.

teenager (ca 1945) and ending with the dissolution of his first pianoless quartet with Chet Baker (1953). Mulligan and Baker split up just after a financial squabble between the two on December 24, 1953, the day Mulligan was released from prison after serving three and a half months for drug possession. Subsequent to the breakup and during most of the 1950s and roughly half of the 1960s, Mulligan's popularity as a performer and leader skyrocketed, but his productivity as a composer/arranger fell off significantly. His writing career was rejuvenated in the mid 1960s, and he spent the rest of his life writing prolifically. Besides continuing to write jazz compositions for various size ensembles, Mulligan also wrote film scores, musical theater, popular songs (with actress Judy Holliday providing the lyrics), exotic eastern music, and symphonic works.

To date, despite the availability of a huge collection of primary sources which Franca Mulligan, Gerry's widow, has made available through the Library of Congress, no scholarly study has been undertaken to examine this material, particularly in the context of Mulligan's development as composer/arranger. This Library of Congress Mulligan Collection consists of hundreds of items stored in boxes that have been inventoried by the Library's Music Division staff. The Collection consists of album scores, lead sheets, sketches, Concert Jazz Band arrangements, miscellaneous arrangements for medium size ensembles, combo arrangements, symphonic scores, correspondence, and other papers relating to concerts and projects.

A particularly invaluable source is also available to me for this study. In 1995, Mulligan recorded his oral history through a series of interviews conducted by Ken

Poston, Director of the Los Angeles Jazz Institute. The memoirs address such topics as his childhood; his associations with Gil Evans, Miles Davis, Charlie Parker, Thelonious Monk, and Gene Krupa; his pianoless quartet with Chet Baker; his ideas about counterpoint; and his heroin addiction. Through an agreement executed between myself and Franca Mulligan, she has provided me with a digital copy of all twenty-six hours of interviews and has granted me permission to use these recordings for my research. In addition she has invited me to her Darien, Connecticut, home, which she shared with Gerry, to see his studio, books, magazines, recordings, and other items reflecting his wide-ranging interests.

Of particular interest will be Mulligan's unique creative and intellectual processes, their context in his collaboration with other musicians, their effect on the evolution of his style throughout his early career, and their influence on other modern jazz composer/arrangers.

Part I: Apprentice

Childhood

And [Stan] Getz and I used to feel kind of like an isolated group because we were a couple of the only guys born in New York City. We were hanging out together in the forties.⁸

Gerald Joseph Mulligan, the youngest of four brothers, was born in Queens Village, New York, on April 6, 1927. The fact that he was three-quarters Irish later prompted pianist John Lewis, “who felt that there have been too few men of Irish descent among the major jazz figures,” to welcome him into that category with special warmth.⁹ Both his parents were descended from Irish immigrants who came to America to work on the railroad. “My father’s family had worked on the Baltimore & Ohio and Chesapeake & Ohio ... My mother’s family also were railroad men. My grandfather on my mother’s side was an engineer on the Pennsylvania.”¹⁰ Mulligan’s early fascination with trains would later be reflected in his thinking about music.

Mulligan’s parents married in Philadelphia where his older brothers were born. His father, a management engineer, moved the family to Queens after accepting a position with Merritt-Chapman & Scott, a New York marine salvage and construction firm. George Mulligan would continue to move from one job to another in different cities with his family in tow throughout Gerry’s childhood. Before he dropped out of high school and hit the road with the Tommy Tucker band at age

⁸ Mulligan, oral history.

⁹ Nat Hentoff, “Profiles, ‘In the Mainstream: Gerry Mulligan - I,’” *The New Yorker*, March 21, 1959, 66.

¹⁰ Mulligan, oral history.

seventeen, Mulligan had lived in Marion, Ohio; Franklinville, New Jersey; Lockport, New York; Chicago; Kalamazoo, Michigan; Detroit; Reading, Pennsylvania; and Philadelphia.¹¹ He later regrets the fact that, because of his transient childhood, he never had the opportunity to form lasting friendships due to his always being the new boy in town. “I became uncommonly insecure in my relations with other people. ... I think it probably had a lot to do with the feelings of being an outsider I’ve always had, which I nurse, pretty much, to this day.”¹²

The Mulligan family lived in Marion from the time Gerry was one year old until he was ten. He took his first piano lessons in the second grade at the Catholic school he attended. “I took one semester of lessons ... we had the first recital of the new students and I was terrible, an absolute failure. So, afterwards the nun told my mother, ‘Save your money, he’ll never play this stuff the way it’s written.’ So, my career as a piano player was nipped in the bud, so to speak.”¹³ Apparently, he had failed to memorize his assigned piece, and after two attempts to play it, raced to the end, improvising. Even after this fiasco, he taught himself to play the family’s piano, mostly by ear, and he would often transcribe the songs he wanted to learn. “And I never learned to read fast. I never could read piano music.”¹⁴

His favorite memories of Marion are of Lily Rowan, the African-American maid his parents hired to watch over him. She was kind, even-tempered, and not as authoritarian as his father.

¹¹ Hentoff, “Profiles (Part 1),” 66.

¹² Mulligan, oral history.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

My father could be a pretty stern fellow; not given much to a sense of humor and had some very authoritarian kind of rules. And even as a small kid, I guess I was not eating something I should have been eating, and by God you're supposed to eat everything on your plate, and I don't know if he smacked me or what, you know, and Lily comes flying in from the kitchen and said, "Don't you hit my...", what did she call me? "Don't you hit my Bonzo." I was her baby. And it's funny, because in that way my relationship with Lily is really the thing that was so different between my childhood and my brothers. And I suppose the youngest always gets the rap of being spoiled, you know, but in this case, what seemed perfectly normal to me, my relationship to Lily, must have seemed to the rest of them like I was really spoiled, to have a protector and to have a woman who was so warmhearted and outgoing. She literally adopted me.¹⁵

Even after he was old enough for her not to have to take care of him anymore, he would visit her and her husband, a hotel head waiter, at their house. "She had a player piano and I used to love that. She had all kinds of things, Fats Waller rolls and all sorts of things, so I used to be lean against the piano bench with nose at keyboard height pumping away, playing this stuff."¹⁶ Also through Lily, Mulligan met numerous African-American musicians who stayed with the Rowans, as they travelled through town.

In a tribute to Mulligan after he died, Ira Gitler wrote that as early as his Marion childhood, Mulligan first dreamed of a life as a musician.

It was in Marion, Ohio, . . . ("I was in the second or third grade"), he spied Red Nichols' bus parked in front of a hotel. He remembered that it was the first time he had the feeling of wanting to play in a band. "It was a small, old Greyhound bus with a canopied observation platform," he reminisced, "and on the bus was printed 'Red Nichols and his Five Pennies.' It all symbolized travel and adventure. I was never the same after that."¹⁷

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ira Gitler, "Obituary," *Jazz Times*, xxvi/5 (1996): 50.

After New Jersey and New York, the Mulligans moved to Chicago for one school year (1937-38). At the height of the swing era in one of the most musically active cities, “My brother Phil and I would be off to the theaters all the time to hear the bands.”¹⁸ At that time, many of the important bands were playing the theaters as well as ballrooms, which was fortunate for the then eleven-year-old Gerry, who was not old enough to be allowed into the ballrooms.

Kalamazoo also exposed Mulligan to the alluring sounds of the travelling dance bands as they passed through town. His musical education officially got started after his family moved there in 1938. He borrowed a clarinet from the school and began taking lessons from a young neighborhood trumpeter. From these earliest days as a musician, Mulligan believed that whatever he learned, he would be better off teaching himself, an attitude that would prevail throughout his career. He was the consummate autodidact. “That guy [his trumpeter neighbor] taught me many bad habits I’ve been years breaking. The way I’ve learned the instruments I play is by *playing* them, by standing up and blowing at sessions. On the whole, I haven’t had much luck with instruction.”¹⁹

Mulligan remembers that his first experience as an arranger came the following school year when, as a member of the orchestra, he decided to score the popular song “Lover” for the ensemble. His choice of this particular song, written by Richard Rodgers for the 1932 film *Love Me Tonight*, shows his early fascination with

¹⁸ Mulligan, oral history.

¹⁹ Hentoff, “Profiles (Part 1),” 70.

chromatic chord progressions. The harmonic structure of the first sixteen measures of the 32-bar chorus is a descending sequence by half-step of ii7-V7 progressions:

Cmaj7/Cmaj7/ F#m7 /B7 / Fm7 /Bb7 /Em7 /A7 /Eb7 /Ab7 /Dm7 /G7 /Em7/
A7/Dm7/ G7/

Because of the interesting melodic and voice-leading possibilities that such a progression provides, numerous jazz artists, including Art Tatum, Charlie Parker, Ella Fitzgerald, Art Blakey, and even Mulligan himself with Paul Desmond, have recorded versions of this song since the thirties. So it is quite impressive that Gerry Mulligan, the precocious preteen, arranged and wrote out parts to this future jazz standard for his grade school classmates. Unfortunately his arrangement never got performed.

It was very simple with a lot of whole notes and quarter notes and I tried to get the moving parts working for our limited instrumentation. Well, I ultimately never heard it because our school was taught by nuns and, like a fool, I put on the top of each one of the sheets the title, “*Lover*.” It never occurred to me that would be a problem. She took one look at the title and that was the end my arranging career in Kalamazoo.²⁰

In Detroit, Mulligan befriended his neighbors’ son, Jack O’Connor, who was a newly ordained priest. “The O’Connors enjoyed life. For a while, Father Jack had me won over to the point where I wanted to be a priest, not that I was ready to give up music altogether; I thought there’d be a wide-open field for writing church music.” This desire to serve the Church quickly diminished after Gerry found out how many years of school would be required. He soon decided that he would need to find other channels for writing music.

In the summer of 1943, the family landed in Reading where Mulligan worked as an office clerk in order to save up enough money to buy a clarinet. It is here that he took lessons from a dance band musician named Sam Correnti, the only music teacher whom

²⁰ Mulligan, oral history.

he remembers in a positive light. “He [Correnti] liked to take jazz solos off records, and so I was playing things that Jimmy Dorsey and Artie Shaw played.”²¹ Mulligan’s proficiency improved to the point where his high school band director would begin taking him out on professional dates. “I’d go as his first clarinetist and he used to like it when I would improvise solo parts instead of playing what was written.”²² This led to his playing with various other bands in town. Eventually, at age sixteen, he formed his own band which performed often at the various private clubs around Reading. Since the theaters and ballrooms were closed on Sundays due to the Pennsylvania blue laws, private clubs proliferated, creating a high demand for musicians.

I started a little quartet with the kids at school and I started another little band with a friend in town. Both of us were alto players, and we’d have maybe two or three saxophones and a trumpet. We’d be working every weekend. We played the Seventh Democratic, the Polish-American Democratic, The Sixth Ward Republicans Club, the Irish American Club, the Jewish-American Veterans. ... You name it, we played it.²³

The band played both stock and Mulligan arrangements. Correnti encouraged Mulligan to write, and a portion of the weekly lesson was devoted to scoring techniques. For example, one exercise was for Mulligan to take an existing arrangement of “Dark Eyes,” written for three saxophones and three brass, and re-score it for four saxophones and four brass.²⁴ Mulligan responded well to this method of teaching through informed experimentation, rather than through rote application of prescribed method. “When Correnti gave me the score, I didn’t stop to figure that I didn’t know how to do it, so I went ahead and did it. He knew there’d be problems, and that I’d work out the ones I

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

could and ask him about the rest. He had a stimulating attitude towards music and toward kids.”²⁵

²⁵ Hentoff, “Profiles (Part 1),” 74.

Johnny Warrington Band

When George Mulligan moved the family to Philadelphia in 1944, Gerry entered West Philadelphia Catholic High School for Boys. “There were over 2,000 boys enrolled and no girls and there was [virtually] no music in the place. They had a band that was pretty dreadful, even by my youthful standards. You know, I had played with some pretty good bands [in Reading] by that point.”²⁶ Fortunately, his mentor at the school, Brother Martin, understood Mulligan’s desire and potential, so rather than forcing him to participate in the marching band, granted him unlimited access to the band room, where he could be more creative. By that time, Mulligan had bought a tenor saxophone, so he put together a band of schoolmates and began arranging charts for it. The scoring for the instrumentation he inherited must have been challenging, to say the least. “I wound up having four trumpets, one trombone. The five reeds were the two saxes and the rest were clarinets. I probably didn’t have a bass player at all; I had piano and drums. I can’t imagine what it sounded like.”²⁷ Perhaps this helped prepare him for his arranging work later in life for various non-standard instrumentations. He recalls that, because he leaned heavily on clarinet lead for voicings, the ensemble had, more or less, a Glenn Miller sound. Mulligan played tenor saxophone in the band.

I’m not too sure why I switched from clarinet to tenor [saxophone]. One thing was that there wasn’t any tenor [player] in the school and there were a couple of clarinets. Then hearing Coleman Hawkins’

²⁶ Mulligan, oral history.

²⁷ Ibid.

recording of “Body and Soul” didn’t hurt any. I continued on clarinet, too, and admired Artie Shaw, Benny Goodman, and Irving Fazola. At first, I preferred Shaw’s playing to Goodman’s, because Shaw was more romantic, and had a mellower, bigger sound. As I came to know more about the workings of jazz, I grew to appreciate Goodman more, because there’s more real jazz in his playing.²⁸

Arranging, however, was Mulligan’s primary focus. Through his experiences at West Catholic, Correnti’s earlier guidance, the popularity of his ensemble work in Reading, and the independent streak he developed thanks to the frequent family uprooting making him always the outsider, Mulligan became more confident in his writing. This confidence got him his first paid arranging job.

He had met a pianist in Reading who subsequently moved to Philadelphia and worked with Johnny Warrington, the leader of a thirty-piece radio orchestra at Philadelphia station WCAU during the 1940s. When the pianist heard that Mulligan would be moving to Philadelphia, he suggested a visit with Warrington.

So once I got established in Philadelphia, I went down to WCAU, a CBS station in Philadelphia and marched into Johnny Warrington’s office and said, “I’d like to write for your band.” And Johnny laughed and said, “Well, why not?” And so he assigned some tune for me to do and said, “Here, take this. See what you can do with it. We use it for the weekly network show.” So I did.²⁹

Warrington himself was a prolific arranger whose charts are still marketed. It took Mulligan a few weeks to complete the arrangement and bring it back to the WCAU studio. The two of them went through the chart and Mulligan recalls that Warrington made numerous suggestions. “And he said, ‘Well, let’s see. You did this here. Why don’t you try this? And you could have done so and so in these bars here. Now this

²⁸ Hentoff, “Profiles (Part 1),” 77.

²⁹ Mulligan, oral history.

might be better here and why didn't you voice this like this?"³⁰ So Mulligan went home, incorporated the suggestions, brought back the revision and Warrington bought the arrangement for thirty-five dollars and assigned Mulligan another one. "And so that was the beginning of my professional career as an arranger, with Johnny as kind of a mentor helping me get started. He was more of an arranging teacher than I'd ever had before or have had since."

In an interview with Nat Hentoff, Warrington remembers Mulligan less for his ability than for his impatience. He recalls that a few years after their first meeting, Mulligan sold several arrangements "to an outfit that must have been the most clamorous in quasi-jazz history."³¹ After watching the band rehearse his work, he was so horror-stricken with the quality of the performance that he threw down his money and demanded his arrangements back. After being told of the incident, Warrington recalls that "He [Mulligan] was real mad. He said the guys in the band could play the notes but couldn't interpret them."³²

During the war, there was a great demand for musicians under eighteen, so in the summer of 1944, it was easy for Mulligan to find work. He landed a job playing tenor saxophone for Alex Bartha's band, one of the house bands at the Steel Pier in Atlantic City. Despite the fact that one of his bandmates said to him, "You'd better concentrate on writing. You don't play your horn that well,"³³ he generally got along well in the band. When he heard that Bartha was making plans to take the band on

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Hentoff, "Profiles (Part 1)," 78.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

the road, Mulligan made plans to quit school. “Little did I know that Alex had been saying this every summer for the last twenty years, but on the basis of that I quit school.”³⁴ The tour never materialized, so in late 1944, Mulligan was out of school and out of work.

³⁴ Mulligan, oral history.

Tommy Tucker Band

Jimmy [Tyson, Johnny Warrington's manager,] had nothing for me to do, so I used to hang out in his outer office, and every band that came through town would call him up and say, "We need a substitute trombone player or a substitute trumpet player" and Jimmy would say, "Well, listen, do you need a tenor [saxophone] player? An alto [saxophone] player?" And nobody did, until finally Tommy Tucker's band came through around November [1944]. Tommy needed a trombone player and so Jimmy asked, "Do you need a saxophone player?" "No, I don't need a saxophone player." So Jimmy said, "Well, how about an arranger? Can you use an arranger?" And Tommy said, "Well, maybe. Tell me about him." And so he told him that I was a young kid who wants to write and that I'd love to go on the road with him. And so Tommy said, "Send him around to the theater." And so I went around and met with Tommy and his wife and he hired me, to a contract for \$100 a week for three ballads or two jump arrangements, copied. Oh yeah!³⁵

During the Swing Era, big bands that sounded corny, trite, commercially slick, and played in an old-fashioned way were affectionately known as "mickey-mouse" bands. They most often found acceptance in the Midwest, perhaps due to the inherent conservatism of the region. In his book *The Big Bands*, jazz writer/critic/publisher George Simon devotes a (thankfully) short chapter to the mickey-mouse bands. He notes that, "Most of these bands were led not by first-rate musicians (few could stomach these sounds!) but by businessmen, many of whom were top flight executives who knew how to keep their mechanical men operating at maximum efficiency."³⁶ Simon quotes some of his original *Metronome* reviews of several of these bands and their leaders including: Blue Barron ("...musical tricks that associate corn with commercialism and commercialism with corn"); Del Courtney ("After listening ... you may get a bit weak and commence yearning for something more

³⁵ Mulligan, oral history.

³⁶ George Simon, *The Big Bands*, 4th ed. (New York: Schirmer, 1981), 491.

substantial—like a ham sandwich.”); Chuck Foster (“... made an impressive appearance as a band leader, even though his band seldom played very good music”); Jan Garber (“The Idol of the Air Lanes”); Gray Gordon (“... best remembered for his ‘Tic-Toc Music’ ... accentuated by a monotonous beating of two temple blocks”); Everett Hoagland (“The most danceable and least boring of music’s mickey mice”); Art Kassel (“Intonation must mean nothing to these boys”); Orville Knapp (“... jolted its listeners with sudden, dramatic brass outbursts and subsequent sharp diminuendos.”); and Gerry Mulligan’s new boss, Tommy Tucker. Simon’s review of Tucker describes a bandleader whose conservative approach to music would eventually be at odds with the free-spirited mind-set of the recent high school dropout.

Tommy Tucker, a short, gentle man with a bright smile and a Phi Beta Kappa key, used to wave a long, thin baton with broad sweeping motions at an orchestra that produced most of the usual sweet staples plus several very good singers ... [including] Amy Arnell, who sang some songs better than others but projected a truly haunting quality with a vocal group that sang the band’s lovely theme, “I Love You (Oh, How I Love You).” Tommy worked regularly and in good spots for many years. ... Then, in 1941, Tommy blazed when his record of “I Don’t Want to Set the World on Fire” became a smash hit. During most of the band’s career it had suffered from emaciated-sounding arrangements, which invariably made the band sound smaller than it actually was. But in 1944, Tommy took on Van Alexander, Claude Hopkins and Fred Norman to write new arrangements ... and the outfit blossomed into a highly impressive musical one. Unfortunately, Tucker had by this time become so identified with mickey-mouse music that his fans didn’t go along with his switch, so he reverted to his rodent routine.³⁷

³⁷ Ibid., 493-4.

Mulligan remembers Tucker's band as being "a very stylized, commercial band, but they also had some very good charts written by some first rate arrangers."³⁸ Perhaps, at that time, the band was performing charts by Alexander, Hopkins, and Norman. Prior to his stint with Tucker, Alexander had arranged the version of "A Tisket, a Tasket" which had become the breakout hit for Ella Fitzgerald with the Chick Webb orchestra. He later worked for Bing Crosby and was subsequently awarded several Grammys. Hopkins, originally a stride pianist, had been musical director of La Revue Negre which starred Josephine Baker in Europe. When he returned from Europe, Hopkins toured with several bands until forming his own Harlem group which played successful residency engagements at the Cotton Club, Savoy Ballroom, and Roseland Ballroom. Mulligan, was not only initially impressed with the band's arrangements, he liked the musicianship as well. "There were a lot of good musicians in the band and Tommy was a good musician so it was like they were very conscious of what they were doing, and their musicianship was very high."³⁹ This was the young arranger's first experience writing for a touring band of such stature, so it is not surprising that he was initially overjoyed with the opportunity.

That was my first experience on the road with a name band as an arranger. That was 1945, I guess, and that would make me 17 going on 18. It was the last year of the war. We traveled by cars. When we hit a town, I would be out of the car like a shot and into the hotel. Is there a room with a piano? It was always a search for a piano. And I never managed to make the three ballads or two jumps a week. But I got pretty close.⁴⁰

³⁸ Mulligan, oral history.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Gene Lees, *Arranging the Score: Portraits of the Great Arrangers* (London: Cassell, 2000), 130.

He went out of his way, however, to downplay his enthusiasm. “I resolved to be as blasé as anybody else,” he recalls, “and I was.”⁴¹

It is also not surprising that the new sounds he would hear while on the road would stir a new creativity at odds with Tucker’s ways. For almost two of the three months that Mulligan worked for Tucker, the band was in residence at the supper club of the Stevens Hotel in Chicago. During this engagement in the big city, Mulligan took every opportunity to go out and experience the sounds of the bands touring through Chicago. He specifically recalls hearing Billy Eckstine’s orchestra. “That was the first time I heard Dizzy [Gillespie] play. He was with Billy Eckstine’s band.”⁴²

Eckstine had left Earl Hines’ band in 1944, taking tenor saxophonist Budd Johnson and Gillespie with him to serve as the co-musical directors of his new organization, one of the first big bands to perform bebop arrangements. During the band’s four-year existence, Eckstine’s sidemen included Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Gene Ammons, Dexter Gordon, Miles Davis, Kenny Dorham, Fats Navarro, and Art Blakey performing arrangements by Gillespie, Johnson, Tadd Dameron, Gil Fuller, and Jerry Valentine. And the style of these arrangements was the antithesis of the style of the mickey-mouse bands. As Eckstine recalls,

We didn’t have it easy; our type of music was more or less a concert style of jazz. People would start to dance, and then they’d turn around and listen. Sometimes our tempos were almost not danceable either. Diz made an arrangement of “Max is Makin’ Wax,” which was way

⁴¹ Hentoff, “Profiles (Part 1),” 78.

⁴² Mulligan, oral history.

up there, featuring him and Bird [Parker]. You couldn't dance to that at all, but people would stand there and watch.⁴³

Eckstine also acknowledged the fact that his music was more popular among young musicians like Gerry Mulligan, than among the dancing public.

We never had any problem with the young musicians; they loved it; they loved the band. Everywhere we'd go there was a following of young musicians. But the populace, in general, and the powers that be, that booked the bands, and the clubs were used to listening to a certain type of music. They were not thrilled by us coming in; young, wild, crazy young cats playing this style. ... but the youngsters always dug the band.⁴⁴

So Mulligan absorbed everything he heard from the hippest bands, the bands that would influence his writing for the next several years. He recalls, "I picked up stuff from everything I heard, you know—all of those bands. My ears were constantly ringing with the ideas that guys were working on. And I became more and more influenced by the things I heard. I also heard Ellington's band play so it was inevitable that I'd start trying to incorporate these things and to try to start to learn how to use them."⁴⁵

Inevitably, Mulligan began to integrate the melodic phrasing, rhythms, tempos, and other stylistic characteristics of modern jazz into his arrangements for Tucker, with the predictable result.

My arrangements for Tommy started to get more and more wild, although I think Tommy liked what I did. There's one thing of mine on a Hindsight record, taken from an aircheck. It's called "Brass hats." I used plungers and hats. Years later, when I heard this thing, I fell off my chair,

⁴³ Dizzy Gillespie with Al Fraser, *To Be or Not... to Bop, Memoirs* (New York: Doubleday, 1979), 190.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Mulligan, oral history.

because I had copied Erskine Hawkins' "After Hours." I didn't mean to copy it, but it was very close.⁴⁶

He later told Ira Gitler, "My charts kept getting wilder and wilder. So I wrote myself right out of a job [laugh]."⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Lees, 130.

⁴⁷ Ira Gitler, *Swing to Bop* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 133.

Part II: Sideman

Elliot Lawrence Orchestra

And I became more and more influenced by the things I heard. I heard Ellington's band play so it was inevitable that I'd start trying to incorporate these things and try to learn how to use them. . . .so I heard those bands and all of the other bands in town [Chicago] and of course my arrangements for Tommy [Tucker] were getting a little wilder, and when the three months were up, he [Tucker] said, 'Well, listen, it's been great and you know, you've written a lot of good things for the band and I like it, but I think that your path lies in a different direction. But if ever you want to go into any kind of a business, you let me know. I'd be glad to invest money in you in anything—*except a band.*'"⁴⁸

The eighteen-year-old Mulligan returned to Philadelphia in early 1945, just in time for his pre-induction physical exam for the United States Selective Service. The war was still going on, so young men continued to be drafted, and Mulligan's eligibility exposed him to the possibility. "I think it was quite obvious that I was not Army material because I was not about to be molded into anything requiring that amount of obedience. If they had offered me a job in a band I would have been off like a shot, because that's something that I know. Carrying a gun, forget it. I'm not interested."⁴⁹ When it was time for the interview portion of his pre-induction exam, Mulligan froze. A lump formed in his throat and he was unable to speak which led to his rejection. He recalls, "And his [military interviewer's] comment was, 'Well, you're obviously a bad apple. You have one bad apple in a barrel and it'll spoil the whole thing.' And he made me so happy that day. So that was the end of it."⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Mulligan, oral history.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

His next stop was radio station WCAU, where he had previously written a number of arrangements for Johnny Warrington's studio band. The station was now featuring the big band of Elliot Lawrence. Lawrence, who was open to innovative approaches, hired Mulligan to write, and, since he could play both the clarinet and saxophone, employed him in the reed section as well. Mulligan welcomed the opportunity to be a central voice in the band that was led by the young, progressive Lawrence. The ensemble had such novel features as a brass section that included a French horn, and a pianist (Lawrence) whose delicate interjections and solos created a departure from routine dance numbers. Mulligan was ready to create.

From the mid-forties to the mid-fifties Elliot Lawrence (b. 1925) led one of the most exciting and original big bands of the late-to-post swing era. Stan Woolley observes that "although it was essentially a dance band, Lawrence also had an ear to what was happening on 52nd Street [bebop], and throughout its existence, the band presented a very modern aspect."⁵¹

After graduating from the University of Pennsylvania where he studied conducting with Leon Barzin,⁵² Lawrence was hired in 1944 as music director of Philadelphia radio station WCAU where his father was an executive. There, he assembled a studio big band that performed regularly on the air. The original band was composed of three trumpets, three trombones, a French horn, five saxes, and a four-piece rhythm section: solo piano, orchestra piano, bass and drums. Jazz critic George Simon happened to be listening to WCAU one evening because the New

⁵¹ Stan Woolley, "Elliot Lawrence--Forgotten Big Band Leader," *Jazz Journal International*, 50, no. 5 (1997): 8.

⁵² Barzin was also the founding musical director of both the New York City Ballet and the National Orchestral Association (NOA).

York Stations were blacked out, and heard the Lawrence band performing. He was so impressed that he raved about it in the March 1945 issue of *Metronome*.

At times the band sounded liked Claude Thornhill's, especially when Lawrence played his delicate piano solos and fill-ins and the arrangements spotted his very good French-horn player. But the band also had a great deal of rhythmic sparkle, some of it attributable to the scores (Gerry Mulligan was one of the arrangers, Lawrence was another) and some to the tremendous drive of the trumpet section.⁵³

The arrangements that Mulligan wrote for Lawrence were instrumental in elevating the band beyond the dance floor. Thanks to the talents of the then eighteen-year-old, Lawrence's book gradually filled with fresh, energetic, boppish arrangements. Mulligan's "Elevation" for Lawrence, a brisk (232 beats per minute) twelve-bar blues, has rhythmic and melodic interest comparable to such Charlie Parker blues-form tunes as "Billie's Bounce" and "Blues for Alice." The arrangement of "Elevation" recorded by the Lawrence band in 1949 begins with a lively introduction followed by the presentation of the melody by a cross-sectional combination of saxophones and trumpets.⁵⁴ The melody is repeated in the second chorus accompanied by a descending harmonized figure on the saxophones. The band then plays four bars of shout chorus with the remainder of the chorus covered by bop-style improvising on tenor saxophone. The next several choruses consist of alternating figures between the band and various improvising soloists. "Elevation" is an impressive early demonstration of the unique talent of the young, self-taught Gerry Mulligan. It is no wonder that the sweet dance band leader Tommy Tucker sent Mulligan on his way after three months, for Tucker's dancing fans would have clearly

⁵³ Simon, 318.

⁵⁴ *Gerry Mulligan: The Arranger*, Columbia JC-34803, 1977.

not appreciated this arrangement. While “Elevation” demonstrates bebop’s influence on Mulligan, British jazz writer Raymond Horricks points out that, with respect to melody, Mulligan presents an original lyricism.

“Elevation” was a Mulligan original in every possible sense; and would lend itself to several recordings, including Red Rodney’s Be-boppers in 1947 on Keynote. The title of “Elevation” suggests height, but in fact, after a “showy” first phrase develops into typical Mulligan long, moving, elastic and very horizontal melodic line in complete contrast to the current, jaggedly chordal themes of the bebop pioneers. On the other hand, its own inherent chords lent themselves to a ready source for modern jazz improvisation.⁵⁵

“Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea” was written by Harold Arlen in 1932 and originally recorded by Cab Calloway. With his arrangement for Lawrence, Mulligan transforms this pre-war popular standard to an arrangement that would foreshadow the progressive writing style inherent in the work he would do for Stan Kenton seven years later. The arrangement, as performed on the Lawrence album entitled *Sugar Beat*, follows the 32-bar (AABA) song form of the Arlen original.⁵⁶ Lawrence starts things off with an initial statement of the melody on piano followed by the formulaic restatement, this time in the saxophones accompanied by attractive patterns in the brass. The saxophones continue through the bridge, but instead of repeating the opening theme as is normally the case in the last eight bars of 32-bar song form, the saxophones enter and play an alternative melody in the style of Charlie Parker over the original’s harmony. The trumpets continue into the next chorus with a riff that accompanies the improvising trombone soloist. Later in the song, after a

⁵⁵ Raymond Horricks, "Gerry Mulligan's Own Special Sense of Good Movement", *Crescendo and Jazz Music*, Dec 1997 - Jan 1998, 6.

⁵⁶ *Sugar Beat*, Elliot Lawrence Orchestra, Big Band Archives 1219, 1949.

chorus of call-and-response in the brass, Mulligan himself enters on baritone saxophone for an improvised chorus in the horn's upper register. The final statement of the melody is in the contrasting lower register of the unison trombones. As Klinkowitz observes, "Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea" demonstrates numerous techniques the young arranger has already developed:

In three minutes and five seconds Mulligan has done almost everything: redistributing melodic statements from one section of the band to another, dropping the piano and then the baritone sax into the unlikeliest contexts, and dividing bridges—into even smaller elements, giving part to ensemble playing and part to soloist.⁵⁷

The *Sugar Beat* album also contains Mulligan's first of several big band arrangements of the popular song "How High the Moon," originally written by Morgan Lewis and Nancy Hamilton for the 1940 Broadway revue, *Two for the Show*. Benny Goodman's 1940 hit version of the song is one of its earliest jazz adaptations. Since then, numerous jazz arrangements have been recorded by such artists as Duke Ellington, Ella Fitzgerald, Dizzy Gillespie, Lionel Hampton, Stan Kenton, and Les Paul. Other jazz musicians have composed contrafacts to the song—that is, newly created melodies written over the chord progression of "How High the Moon." The most notable example is Charlie Parker's "Ornithology." The probable reason for the popularity of the song's harmonic structure as a basis for not only jazz arrangements, but for entirely new melodies, lies in the fact that its descending chord progression lends itself well to creating interesting melodic ideas. Essentially, the harmony is based on a string of three ii-V7-I progressions where the 'I' of one progression becomes the "ii" of the lowered next progression by virtue of a change in its quality.

⁵⁷ Klinkowitz, 16.

Mulligan's 1945 arrangement for Lawrence precedes "Ornithology" by one year. Interestingly, for his arrangement of the song for Gene Krupa a year later, the astute young arranger quotes Parker's contrafact. The 1945 arrangement has a much more traditional feel than either the Krupa arrangement or Mulligan's "Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea" on the same Lawrence album. This is clearly a dance arrangement with a considerable level of excitement to keep jitterbuggers happy and several good solos, including one by Lawrence on piano.

Even though Mulligan was as eager to play as to arrange, Lawrence only rarely let him perform, considering him an amateur. Mulligan asserts, "My playing may have been amateurish, but it was different. Most of the kids at that time were playing a hard honking style of tenor, and were running all over their horn. My approach was gentler. I preferred to compose on my horn—to compose a real simple melody that came off."⁵⁸

It was during his tenure with Elliot Lawrence that Mulligan would meet and perform with Charlie Parker, beginning an association that would later lead to several collaborations. In 1945, both the Elliot Lawrence Orchestra and the Charlie Parker/Dizzy Gillespie Quintet were booked to perform a concert at the Philadelphia Academy of Music. This was one of the early attempts to program a jazz concert in an important orchestra hall. Mulligan recalls:

My first experience with Bird [Parker] personally was kind of remarkable. I was arranging for Elliot Lawrence's band and Bird came into town with Dizzy [Gillespie] to do a concert at The Academy of Music. They had their quintet. Sarah Vaughn was on the show also. I guess this was one of her first concerts. She was a shy stick kid, man. She must have been 18 or 19 years old and had this big voice. They [Parker,

⁵⁸ Hentoff, "Profiles (Part 1)," 80.

Gillespie] got into town on I guess Saturday because that was the day we had the [regular] network program with the band. Red Rodney [a Lawrence trumpeter at the time] had [previously] met him [Parker] in New York. So, he brought Bird by the studio to meet everybody and hear the band. Bird was great. Everybody liked him and he was very complimentary and he liked the charts of mine that he heard.⁵⁹

Even though the Lawrence Orchestra would be playing some of his arrangements at the Academy concert, Mulligan was not initially scheduled to perform with the band. This was unfortunate because he had wanted Parker to hear him play. A sudden turn in events, however, worked in his favor. “I went home that night. The next morning I got a call from an exasperated Elliot [Lawrence]. He said, ‘Better bring your tenor today. Frank Lewis tripped on his kid’s skate on the stairs and broke his wrist. So, he can’t play.’”⁶⁰ So Mulligan wound up playing the concert.

Parker must have been impressed with the teenager at the earlier radio broadcast, because, as Mulligan recalls, prior to the Academy concert Parker and Gillespie visited with him: “I met with Bird then, and we talked, and he said, ‘After the show [concert], bring your tenor over to the Downbeat [Club] behind the Earle and play.’”⁶¹ So they played the concert, and afterwards, Mulligan went to the Downbeat with his saxophone in tow, and he stashed it in the cloak room. Parker was participating in a jam session led by fellow saxophonist, Don Byas. Mulligan remembers that it was Parker who eventually retrieved the saxophone from the cloak room, removed it from its case, and handed it to the youngster saying, “. . . ‘Here.

⁵⁹ Mulligan, oral history.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Gitler, *Swing to Bop*, 220.

Now. O.K. Let's play.' And he made me play with him. And he was terrific because he gave me the confidence in myself that I lacked. Unfortunately for my confidence up to that point, some of the guys that I knew in Philadelphia, the attitude towards me was, 'Well, man, you don't play very well. But, uh you can *write*.' . . . So Bird was really the first one who ever encouraged me to play."⁶² As impressionable as the young Mulligan was, he began to perform more frequently, perhaps as a result of new-found confidence from this incident.

Mulligan and Parker would remain friends and associates until Parker's death in 1955. In the spring of 1951, Parker fronted a big band for a week-long engagement at the Apollo Theater in Harlem. Sahib Shihab, Charlie Rouse, and Gerry Mulligan comprised the saxophone section of the ensemble, which also included strings. Mulligan had arranged two of the pieces for the strings unit, "Rocker" and "Goldrush."⁶³ Despite not being fond of the inclusion of orchestral instruments in the ensemble, Mulligan was happy with his arrangements, particularly with respect to Parker's approach to integrating their simplicity with his playing style. Mulligan recalls:

There was one week that I worked with Charlie at the Apollo Theatre. I worked it with the group that was based around a string band, with some incredibly stupid string section. I think there were three violins, a viola, and a cello. The very pedestrianness of the arrangements made the absolute perfect foil for Bird. Because later on guys wrote more interesting arrangements, and the results were not nearly as effective. By the very simplicity of the arrangements, it was a better framework to hear Bird do what he could do. He'd play a bloody melody and would elevate it into something that was art.⁶⁴

⁶² Ibid., 221.

⁶³ Brian Priestly, *Chasin' the Bird* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 84.

⁶⁴ Gitler, *Swing to Bop*, 222.

During his initial tenure in the Lawrence organization, Mulligan and his band leader became good friends. “He [Lawrence] and I became friends because we were both a lot younger than the guys in the band.”⁶⁵ This would lead to jealousy towards Mulligan from the other musicians resulting in his leaving the band in 1946.

Mulligan believes that Lawrence’s policy of publicly acknowledging each piece’s arranger, particularly after the band’s weekly WCAU show had begun to be broadcast nationally by CBS, helped him gain the recognition that would lead to later successes.

Elliot always wanted to give the arrangers credit and Miles had that attitude too. If you were going to put the personnel of the bands on the bill, you should put the names of the arrangers on the bill as well. And so I wound up becoming very well known because we were doing a weekly show featuring Elliot’s band from Philadelphia. And so he was always announcing, ‘this is a composition by Gerry Mulligan’ and then I became like a personality. So by the time I left there, I wound up having some fame to ride on. Wherever I went, they’d heard of me and heard of my charts and that kind of eased the way for me.⁶⁶

Mulligan attributes his individuality at that time to the fact that he was an autodidact. Since he had not learned formal arranging techniques, he was required to approach each arranging project with a blank canvas, forcing him to create fresh ideas. “And this is part of the thing of being self taught. I didn’t learn a system for doing things. I had to solve my problems as they came for everything I wrote. And so I would approach each project as an individual thing.”⁶⁷ As a result, he avoided using formulaic approaches, which allowed his arranging style to continually evolve. “I could never sit

⁶⁵ Mulligan, oral history.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

down and just duplicate the kind of harmonization that I did with a saxophone chorus in the previous chart. I was always very critical of arrangers who did that – you know, kept writing the same arrangement over and over and over again.”⁶⁸ Upon reflection on those early days, he astutely observes,

The very restrictions of my technique forced me to find my own way, and often my own way would produce an individuality that wouldn't have been there otherwise. But I wasn't really consciously trying to do that. I was just trying to come up with a fresh approach to a tune or an idea for a jazz piece that would be interesting to blow on and try to make good settings for the soloists and exciting shout choruses and that sort of thing. So it was really just doing the job as I perceived it. I started to realize that what I was doing sounded a lot different than what other guys were doing, but I never really knew why. I never really understood that and yet it was the sort of thing that I could usually recognize, of the arrangers, the leading arrangers – I could usually identify their writing, in short order. A lot of lesser known arrangers I wouldn't be able to identify because they were writing by rote, as I say, doing the same arrangement over and over again.⁶⁹

For Mulligan, this was a significant confidence-building stage of his young arranging career. Lawrence, a progressive bandleader who had achieved national recognition, saw in Gerry Mulligan, his contemporary and friend, an opportunity to bring fresh jazz sounds to the airwaves. Mulligan, whose self-esteem was enhanced by the public recognition he had gotten from Lawrence and by the opportunity to work with such jazz superstars as Charlie Parker, continued to find his individual voice not only through his writing, but now also through his playing. Even though Mulligan ended his fulltime arrangement with Lawrence in 1946, he would continue to write for him occasionally between other projects until he left the east coast in 1952.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

In 1946, Elliot Lawrence left WCAU and Philadelphia to ride on his success that had resulted from the weekly national broadcasts. His father, Stan Broza, also quit his job at the station to become his son's manager. Lawrence remembers, "I got my big break when CBS began taking broadcasts of the WCAU band and networking them all over the country."⁷⁰ After a successful engagement at the Café Rouge in New York's Hotel Pennsylvania, he increased his exposure on the radio and signed a recording contract with Columbia.

To satisfy the dance crowds, the Lawrence orchestra initially played mostly sweet music featuring vocalists Roz Patton and Jack Hunter. In 1947, the band grossed a quarter million dollars. From 1947 to 1949 it was chosen as the most promising new orchestra on *Billboard's* Annual College Poll. In that same year, *Downbeat* and *Metronome* listed Lawrence as one of the ten best bands in the country. *Billboard* ranked the band as the number seven "All-Around Favorite," behind Vaughn Monroe, Tommy Dorsey, Tex Beneke, Les Brown, Stan Kenton, and Guy Lombardo.⁷¹ Despite this recognition, Lawrence downplayed the "sweet" label in an interview with *Metronome*: "We're not strictly a sweet band, not by any means. Maybe when you hear us in hotel rooms and spots like that you think so, but listen to us on one-nighters and on college dates, and you'll hear us jump, too. I'd die if we didn't and so would the guys."⁷² Thanks to the Mulligan arrangements, the

⁷⁰ Woolley, 8.

⁷¹ Drew Techner, "A Review of the Elliot Lawrence Career," *The Mulligan International Newsletter*, December 2004 - June 2005.

⁷² *Ibid.*

ensemble's sound became increasingly progressive, much to the favor of both Lawrence and his sidemen. Lawrence recalls:

In those days, in order to make a living you had to play for dances but all the guys in the band, and I always had great players in the band, wanted to play the bop things. It was the same when we were recording. Today, the young rock stars are very smart and handle their own careers and decide themselves what they are going to do.⁷³

Simon notes that the band “didn’t feature any really great soloists except for young Red Rodney and for a while Mulligan and then Alex Fila, who under Lawrence began to show that he could play good jazz as well as great lead trumpet.”⁷⁴ Eventually Lawrence hired other young innovative arrangers such as Johnny Mandel, Al Cohn, and Tiny Kahn. After the popularity of big bands began to decline, Lawrence arranged and conducted for several television shows. He eventually became musical director for such Broadway musicals as *Bye Bye Birdie*, *Golden Boy*, and *The Apple Tree*.

The album *Elliot Lawrence Plays Gerry Mulligan Arrangements* was released in 1955.⁷⁵ While Lawrence enthusiastically included Mulligan arrangements on many of his albums, this was the first time that he would dedicate an entire release to the arranger's works. Mulligan actually took exception to the release of this album and publicly accused Lawrence of being opportunistic for exploiting his now (1955) internationally recognized name. Apparently Mulligan wanted to record the arrangements himself. He wrote in the May 7, 1955 issue of *Melody Maker*:

⁷³ Woolley, 9.

⁷⁴ Simon, 319.

⁷⁵ *Elliot Lawrence Plays Gerry Mulligan Arrangements*, Fantasy 3-206, 1955.

People often ask me what I consider my best arrangements. Well, for a period of three or four years, at the end of the forties, I think the best things I wrote were those I did for Elliot Lawrence. I wrote a whole book for Elliot at the time, but later he got Tiny Kahn, Al Cohn, and Johnny Mandel to do some new arrangements and junked mine. I guess they were passé. . . . Elliott never did anything much with my scores, though I prevailed on him to do so. At that period, Elliot wanted to be recognized as a jazz leader, and I feel that if he had recorded my pieces, he would have got some good out of them. The numbers were widely dissimilar, from dance tunes to originals, but there was a feeling running through the arrangements which would have given the band something of a style. . . . A few months ago, I thought of getting a band together and doing something with the same old scores, partly because I'd spent a lot more time on them than I can spend writing these days. In the old days, I worked any time from two weeks to a month on an arrangement. . . . Anyhow, I got on to Elliot. But before I could ask him for the scores, he said he was thinking of recording some of them. . . . I rather gather that the record company with whom Elliot was arranging the session, wants my arrangements now. It makes me fed up. Just because my name has some sales value on records these days, they want to turn around and cash in on it. Not because of the music or the character of it, but just to put my name in big letters on the album cover because they think it'll sell more copies for them. . . . Besides which, the arrangements aren't going to do Elliot as much good now as they would have done when he'd first taken them. I think it was probably the record company that caused him to junk my things then. . . . So Elliot would steer off them, and that's that. Elliot loses, I lose, and the record company loses. Until my name means something—and then the record company wants me back. . . . I can't help but resent the whole thing.⁷⁶

The album consists of eight Mulligan originals (“The Rocker,” “Happy Hooligan,” “Mullenum,” “Bweebida Bwobbida,” “Apple Core,” “Elegy for Two Clarinets,” “The Swinging Door,” and “Mr. President”) and four Mulligan arrangements of standards written by others (“Bye Bye Blackbird” by Mort Dixon and Ray Henderson, “My Silent Love” by Edward Heyman and Dana Suesse, “Strike up the Band” by George and Ira Gershwin, and “But Not for Me” also by the Gershwins).

⁷⁶ Gerry Mulligan, “Gerry Mulligan Writes about His Arrangements for Elliot Lawrence,” *Melody Maker*, May 7, 1955: 12.

Mulligan sold these twelve charts to Lawrence after leaving the Claude Thornhill Orchestra in the fall of 1948 to devote more time to the Miles Davis nonet.

In his review of the two well-known standards “My Silent Love” and “But Not for Me,” Klinkowitz remarks, “Together they serve as somewhat predictable bookends for his [Mulligan’s] late 1940s approach to familiar standards: taking George Gershwin’s usually slow and sentimental ‘But Not for Me’ and giving it a light briskly swinging treatment, while cranking up the traditionally softer “My Silent Love” for a broadly voiced, Broadway pit-orchestra rendition.”⁷⁷ The other Gershwin tune, “Strike up the Band,” was intended as a novelty introduction to the band’s opening at New York’s Paramount Theatre. Klinkowitz regards it as “a standard swing treatment along the lines of Glenn Miller’s ‘American Patrol,’ although Mulligan keeps the decks clear for more open blowing by the soloists, alternating Sousa-like trumpet riffs with boppish ensemble lines from the saxes (producing the humor of Al Cohn sounding like he’s woodshedding behind the barracks of a marching band).”⁷⁸ This arrangement is a precursor for Mulligan’s composition, “Bike up the Strand,” performed by his 1956 quartet which included valve trombonist Bob Brookmeyer. The song is an upbeat contrafact of the original Gershwin tune.

“Mullenum” is an early example of Mulligan’s use of counterpoint, a technique which would become prominent in his pianoless quartets of the 1950s and larger ensemble arranging. According to Lawrence, it is “most typical of Gerry’s little group, what with its trumpet and trombone counterpoint and then with the saxes

⁷⁷ Klinkowitz, 33.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 33-4.

coming along and adding a third line.”⁷⁹ This “concerto grosso” approach would also become a signature of Mulligan’s later big band writing. The title of the song “Bweebida Bwobbida” comes from the words the trombones seem to be saying in their cute opening statement of the theme. “Apple Core” opens with a full unison of the theme, a technique used by Mulligan and other arrangers to give big bands the intimate feeling of a smaller ensemble with fewer voices. Mulligan wrote for Claude Thornhill in the late forties to early fifties, and “Elegy for Two Clarinets” is reminiscent of the tender moods of the Thornhill orchestra. According to George Simon, “the piece was so titled because Gerry just didn't like writing for clarinets in big bands and wanted to bid them farewell in a nice, polite, musicianly manner.”⁸⁰ Ironically, there are no clarinets in this piece. The “Swinging Door” was named for a club over a garage in Manhattan where Mulligan and well-known saxophonist Zoot Sims (who co-wrote the piece) played jam sessions. As Mulligan remembers, “The club’s actual name was ‘The Red Door,’ but Elliot didn’t think that was such a good idea in the days of Joe McCarthy, so it became ‘The Swinging Door.’”⁸¹ “Mr. President” is Mulligan’s tribute to the acclaimed tenor saxophonist Lester “Pres” Young and is a scoring of Young’s solo from his 1939 recording “You Can Depend on Me” with Count Basie. Mulligan greatly admired Young, particularly with respect to the swing-era tenor saxophonist’s elegant and graceful style.

Pres [Young], even in his youth, when he was popping the rhythm out the way he was in [Count] Basie’s band, there was always this kind of elegant grace to the phrases that he played. . . . He kind of sails through the scene

⁷⁹ Liner notes to *Elliot Lawrence Plays Gerry Mulligan Arrangements*.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ Mulligan, oral history.

without leaving any footprints or anything. Pres was soaring, especially at his best, and in his youth. He used to soar with the horn and soar over the rhythm section and soar over the band. I mean that's one of the greatest musical illusions of that period, of Pres playing with Basie band in the thirties. God, it must have been rewarding to be there.⁸²

On December 8, 1957, both Mulligan and Young appeared with Billie Holiday, Coleman Hawkins, Ben Webster, Roy Eldridge, and others on the CBS television special "The Sound of Jazz," performing Holiday's tunes "Lady Sings The Blues" and "Fine and Mellow."

"Mr. President" and the other Mulligan charts for *Elliot Lawrence Plays Gerry Mulligan Arrangements* provide plenty of solo space for Al Cohn's tenor saxophone, Eddie Bert's trombone, Hal McKusick's alto sax and the trumpets of Dick Sherman and Nick Travis. As George Simon points out, "Mulligan's scores are marked by [his] warmth and taste. . . . The section work is wonderfully firm and precise and swings crisply".⁸³

Of the album's eight original compositions, six would be recycled for the smaller groups Mulligan would lead in the 1950s. These would include his 1951 New York tentette, his 1953 California tentette, his 1954 quartet with Bob Brookmeyer that toured Paris, and the sextet formed in 1955 when he added Zoot Sims on tenor saxophone and Jon Eardley on trumpet. "Rocker" would be one of Mulligan's several contributions to the 1950 Miles Davis Nonet sessions and therefore end up on the landmark album *The Birth of the Cool*. Later that same year, Charlie Parker would perform a Mulligan arrangement of "Rocker" at Carnegie Hall with strings (and Mitch Miller on oboe!). See Figure 1.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Liner notes to *Elliot Lawrence Plays Gerry Mulligan Arrangements*.

The image displays a musical score for the piece "Rocker" by Charlie Parker. The score is arranged for a string ensemble and an oboe. The oboe part is marked with a "(Solo)" and features a melodic line with various intervals and dynamics. The string ensemble consists of Violin I (Vln. A), Violin II (Vln. B), Violin III (Vln. C), Viola (Vla.), Violoncello (Vc.), and Harp (Harp). The harp part includes a section marked "8va G9" with a tremolo effect. The score is written in 4/4 time and includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings.

Figure 1: Oboe lead in string arrangement of “Rocker” for Charlie Parker

“Rocker” shares a characteristic with several of the other scores from the album in that they show that Mulligan is getting good at opening up the arrangements for solo playing, being flexible with respect to organization, and providing more intricate ensemble sections. Not only did the charts for Lawrence establish Mulligan as a talented arranger capable of linking the appeal of dance music to the innovations of modern jazz, but they also provided a collection of source material for his later smaller groups.

The young arranger’s temperament, however, would have him moving on within a year. Nat Hentoff recounts Mulligan’s recollection of his termination:

The end came as a result of a practical joke of which Mulligan was the butt. During an intermission at a dance held at a catholic school—one of the rare occasions when he played with the band—his colleagues passed around a bottle of whiskey at whirling speed, all pretending to drink heartily from it; the only one actually to take a swig each time

was Mulligan, and he finally passed out. When he came to, he felt humiliated and coldly angry, and soon afterward he gave his notice.⁸⁴

Gerry Mulligan would continue to have periodic troubles with his fellow musicians.

Up until the time he left New York for California in 1952, Mulligan continued occasionally to provide arrangements for the Lawrence orchestra. He recalls that, because of his somewhat bohemian existence at the time, he would occasionally have to improvise his approach to writing.

So I did some of the kinds of things that didn't really pay any money. I wrote some arrangements for Elliot Lawrence at that point. In fact those were the only arrangements I ever wrote that I wrote without a piano. And they came out well. I always wished that I had done more without the piano, because taking the piano away as a writing crutch opens up more freedom to writing for the horns; a couple of things that I wrote for Elliot during that period I liked a lot for that.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Hentoff, "Profiles (Part 1)," 80.

⁸⁵ Mulligan, oral history.

Gene Krupa Orchestra

Elliot [Lawrence] and I, both being young guys, became good friends and spent a lot of time together. This created some resentment amongst the other musicians in the [Elliot Lawrence] band and they started to pull some kind of nasty things on me, but we won't go into that now. I just took off and went to New York.⁸⁶

Mulligan, still an impressionable teenager, arrived in New York in the mid forties as bebop was becoming more important. The birth and development of this then revolutionary style was bringing about a gradual shift in musical tastes. Its practitioners developed their unique approach in the after-hour clubs, at jam sessions, and on the road. Bebop rebelled against the popular clichés of swing music, particularly its repeating riffs and accessible melodies, features that Mulligan had grown accustomed to in the Elliot Lawrence and Tommy Tucker bands. His earlier experiences with Charlie Parker in Philadelphia prepared the young musician to open his ears to the new sounds he heard in New York. He noticed that even though bop was mostly developed by young black musicians, the door was open for whites to participate as well. As Scott Deveaux observes,

First, the bebop revolution was distinctly African-American—a movement with a firm base in the musicians' community of Harlem. There were, to be sure, a few white faces in the crowd from the start: Johnny Carisi sat in frequently at Minton's, while as early as 1944, bop bands on 52nd Street used pianists Al Haig and George Wallington and drummer Stan Levey. Racial mixing was no casual public gesture in the early 1940s, even in relatively tolerant New York City. The willingness of blacks like Gillespie to accept and even encourage white musicians in their midst proves that there was no conscious policy of racial exclusion behind bebop. If anything, these transgressions were a deliberate and provocative attempt to extend the relaxed social spirit of the musicians' community, within which personal relations between blacks and whites were more collegial than

⁸⁶ Mulligan, oral history.

in perhaps any other professional sphere of the time, into the broader public sphere of commerce.⁸⁷

Mulligan's fascination with bebop would be reflected in his big band arrangements of the next several years, even though his initial work in New York would be with veteran swing bands. He got a job right away playing tenor saxophone with the Ike Carpenter Orchestra. "It was a fairly small band. We had a couple brass, a couple saxes and I don't even remember what we played, but it was a nice little band."⁸⁸ While the music of the Carpenter band would not have been considered "hot" jazz, it featured several progressive soloists, particularly saxophonist Lucky Thompson, as demonstrated in his performance of the band's cover of Billy Strayhorn's "Take the 'A' Train." One of the trumpeters in the band happened to be Bobby Sims, the brother of tenor saxophonist Zoot Sims, with whom Mulligan would form a highly successful collaboration in the late 1940s and later. Bobby Sims was also a singer, and through him, Mulligan met numerous group singers, and this got him interested in a new pastime. "And we would sit and sing parts. They [the group singers] all knew the arrangements that Davey Lambert had written for groups like the Thornhill Band. Some of his arrangements like 'I Don't Know Why I Love You,' had gotten quite popular. So we used to sit around and sing those songs, like group singers like to do."⁸⁹ Lambert and Buddy Stewart had been a featured vocal duo in Gene Krupa's big band. Stewart's sister, Beverly, who was one of the group singers with whom Mulligan would sing, worked in the New York office of Krupa's business

⁸⁷ Scott DeVeaux, *The Birth of Bop: A Social and Musical History* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997), 168.

⁸⁸ Mulligan, oral history.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

manager, John Gluskin. So, it was through Gluskin that Mulligan was hired to write arrangements for the Krupa band. “I remember I used to go at night up to the Krupa office that he and Johnny Gluskin had together at 1640 Broadway and work on charts to take out to California for when I joined the band.”⁹⁰

In December 1945, Mulligan flew out to California with Beverly Stewart who was hoping to replace the departing Anita O’Day in the Krupa band. “She [Stewart] was a good singer. But we got out there and the first thing that happened was that Beverly found out that they had already hired a singer – it was the girlfriend of the road manager, so that was the end of her career singing with the Gene Krupa band.”⁹¹ Beverly Stewart would marry Stan Getz in 1947.

When Mulligan arrived in Los Angeles, Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker were in the middle of a two-month engagement at Billy Berg’s in Hollywood fronting a group which also included Lucky Thompson on tenor sax, Ray Brown on bass, Al Haig on piano, and Stan Levey on drums.⁹² Mulligan, thanks to the Philadelphia Academy of Music experience and its aftermath, counted himself as an associate of Parker’s and went to hear to the band. His eagerness to please his idol resulted in an unfortunate turn of events.

I guess the next thing that happened – I was there a couple of days and I ran into Charlie Parker and he asked me if I had any pot [marijuana], and I said, “Yeah. I guess I could get a couple of joints.” So I go traipsing down to Billy Berg’s where he was playing and promptly got myself busted with him, standing out in the parking lot smoking pot.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Alyn Shipton, *A New History of Jazz* (London: Continuum, 2001), 477.

So that's a great way to join a band. . . . I spent a very uncomfortable night in the drunk tank.⁹³

He was later convicted for possessing marijuana and given a year's probation in the custody of Gluskin. Parker was never charged.

Mulligan spent a year touring with Krupa, both as an arranger and as an occasional substitute on alto or tenor saxophone with clarinet as a double. He reflects on the evolution of the Krupa band:

Gene's first band was modeled very much like so many other bands featuring guys like the ones who came out of Goodman's band. Then he [Krupa] had a band with strings. He just wanted to have a successful band and was looking for a way to do something that would set the band apart to make a special niche for himself. And he had pretty good success with that. The band had a little dramatic flair, especially about things he would do with drums. It all had drums in it. Then, the band that I was with was kind of a straight ahead swinging band. The singers were Anita O'Day and Roy Eldridge. That's certainly some indication of what you want from your band. If Roy is your romantic singer, I say it's alright with me, man.⁹⁴

Gene Krupa formed his first big band in 1938 after leaving the Bennie Goodman Orchestra. Despite the fact that for three years Krupa on drums had been one of the most popular performers in Goodman's band, the two had their differences particularly with respect to Krupa's showy excesses. A blowup after a performance during the Goodman orchestra engagement at the Earle Theater in Philadelphia (February 26 – March 3, 1938) was the final straw. Bruce Klauber describes the scene: "The crowds were screaming for Gene to 'go' from the moment the band hit the stage. Krupa responded with some bits of gesturing directed toward Goodman, obvious meaning, 'I'm not allowed.' The audience booed and whenever Krupa did a

⁹³ Mulligan, oral history.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

solo bit, Goodman seemed to go out of his way to appear half asleep.”⁹⁵ On March 3, 1938, Krupa left the band to form his own.

Even before they parted ways, not only had Krupa already commissioned arrangers to write charts for the new band, he was also in the process of recruiting musicians. His New York-based lawyer-manager, John Gluskin, who in 1946 would be instrumental in recruiting Gerry Mulligan as an arranger and fill-in saxophonist, handled the business and organizational details. After the band’s first performance in the Marine Ballroom at Atlantic City’s Steel Pier on April 16, 1938, big band critic George T. Simon wrote in *Metronome*:

Krupa’s band is a loud edition of what Goodman’s Gang used to be, pulling its punches even less and presenting for the most part a solid, two-fisted A.C. [Atlantic City] attack that varies more in tempo than it does in volume or intense drive. Paced by a powerful six-man brass section, it maintains a pace that at times is almost punishing in its fierceness, in the way it pelts your ears, and leaves them ringing, and even more so in its ability to hold your musical interest while varying little in musical format.⁹⁶

Initially, Krupa’s drumming was featured on most of the new arrangements, and even though the fans loved it, the quality of the band’s ensemble playing stagnated, stunting any chance for it to develop a better than average sound. Gradually, Krupa cut back on his drum solos, and improvements were eventually made through personnel changes, including the addition of saxophonist Sam Donahue and trumpeters Corky Cornelius and Shorty Sherock. There were many predecessors to Gerry Mulligan on the Krupa arranging staff, including Benny Carter, Adrian de

⁹⁵ Bruce H. Klauber, *The World of Gene Krupa* (Ventura, CA: Pathfinder Publishing, 1990), 31.

⁹⁶ Simon, 304.

Haas, Fletcher Henderson, Elton Hill, Jimmy Mundy, Dave Schultze, George Sivaro (who also played both trumpet and alto saxophone), and Chappie Willet.⁹⁷ Krupa particularly recalls Willet's contribution: "[He] was my first arranger and we got some great things from him—'Blue Rhythm Fantasy,' 'I Know That You Know,' and 'Grandfather's Clock.' . . . Chappie had the knack of being able to put down on paper what the performer wanted, and yet make it sound good."⁹⁸ Female vocalist Jerry Kruger was also hired, who according to Simon, was unfortunately overcome by "1) the excusable lack of knowledge concerning her material, and 2) the less excusable and apparently insatiable desire to sing everything in the style of Billie Holiday."⁹⁹ She was eventually replaced by Irene Daye who was subsequently featured on two hit records, "Drummin' Man" and "Drum Boogie." A young African-American male singer, Leo Watson, who specialized in scat singing before it was made popular by Ella Fitzgerald and others, also briefly toured with the band after joining at the Atlantic City premiere.

Krupa's touring big band of the late thirties was enormously successful and most performances sold out. *Metronome's* 1938 poll listed the band as one of the most popular groups in America, and after Krupa himself was named the top drummer, the magazine enlisted him to write a regular column entitled "Drummer's Dope."¹⁰⁰ The band also appeared in the Hollywood movie *Some Like It Hot*

⁹⁷ Bruce Crowther, *Gene Krupa: His Life and Times* (New York: Universe Books, 1987), 76.

⁹⁸ Klauber, 46.

⁹⁹ Simon, *Metronome*, May 1938 cited in Klauber, 43.

¹⁰⁰ Crowther, 78.

(released May 19, 1939), with Krupa taking third billing behind Bob Hope and Shirley Ross.¹⁰¹

Two key personnel changes significantly transformed the band. After a road romance, Corky Cornelius and Irene Daye got married and left the band to join the Casa Loma Orchestra, leaving Krupa without a featured female vocalist and lead trumpeter. He hired singer Anita O'Day, who, when she had previously auditioned for Benny Goodman, was rejected by him for failing to follow the written melody. O'Day's strongly jazz-oriented style appealed to Krupa and he believed that, "Of all the white singers in jazz, Anita is the one whose sound comes closest to the best black singers. . . . She could sound like a jazz horn."¹⁰² O'Day presented herself as a "hip" jazz musician, and she would wear a band jacket and skirt instead of an evening gown. Her voice was soft and raspy and she had a rhythmic approach to her singing. Within a short period of time, a book of special arrangements was created to showcase her unique talent.

To replace Cornelius, Krupa hired Roy Eldridge, the historically significant trumpeter who is often considered the stylistic link between Louis Armstrong and Dizzy Gillespie. Even though Benny Goodman had recently hired pianist Teddy Wilson and vibraphonist Lionel Hampton, it was rare for black musicians such as Eldridge to appear with white bands. So Krupa initially utilized him as a special soloist only, but soon, the pretense was dropped and Eldridge sat in the trumpet section fulltime. Eldridge's style was fiery: he played higher and faster than any

¹⁰¹ Not to be confused with the more famous 1959 film of the same name directed by Billy Wilder and starring Tony Curtis, Jack Lemmon, and Marilyn Monroe.

¹⁰² Crowther, 82.

other trumpeter of the swing era. Gary Giddins describes the trumpeter's solos as being "etched with slurs, tremors and cries that can't be transcribed, and truth to tell, not even the records can convey the thrill of seeing this charismatic little man, his trumpet grasped with both hands, the notes, climbing, thickening, ratcheting upward and out."¹⁰³

This is particularly verified in the Krupa chart "After You've Gone" where Eldridge plays intricate scale-like passages not unlike those of the improvisations of swing-era saxophonists Benny Carter and Coleman Hawkins. During the performance of this song, the band cheers Eldridge on as he demonstrates how fast he can play. He was also often featured alongside O'Day, and she and the audience would urge him on by crying "Blow, Roy, Blow."

Of the thirty-four arrangements O'Day recorded with Krupa, it was "Let Me Off Uptown," a duet with Eldridge, that became her first big hit. On the recording, the trumpeter precedes his sensational solo with the plea, "Anita, oh Anita! . . . say, I feel somethin'!" Eldridge's solos were likely the primary reason for the enduring appeal of Krupa's band. Unfortunately, the relationship between Eldridge and O'Day soured to the point where they no longer wanted to work with each other. Their frequent quarreling negatively impacted the morale of the organization, and eventually O'Day left the band.

As Krupa increasingly shared the spotlight with others such as O'Day and Eldridge, the band became probably the best he ever led. In 1972, Krupa reflected: "That change in direction helped us make it. Singers like Leo Watson, Irene Daye,

¹⁰³ Giddins, 190.

and our soloists, particularly Roy Eldridge, were what put the band over. Sure people came to see me. But Anita and Roy and the others gave us that extra push and got things cooking.”¹⁰⁴ Krupa had learned that his appeal would endure as long as he continued to surround himself with talented new people who brought fresh sounds, a strategy that would result in Gerry Mulligan’s association with the band.

Krupa was arrested for marijuana possession in 1943, and on May 18 of that year, he was found guilty of the misdemeanor charge, fined \$500 and sentenced to ninety days in jail.¹⁰⁵ For a short period of time, Eldridge led the band, but it soon folded, ending the five-year history of Krupa’s first successful big band. He was released from prison on August 9, and after a successful appeal, one of the original charges was dropped. He returned to New York, and despite being offered a position in Goodman’s new touring band, Krupa opted to stay in New York and accept an offer to join the Tommy Dorsey Orchestra. Despite his brief incarceration, Krupa’s popularity had not waned, as evidenced by his selection once again by the *Metronome* poll (January 1944) as the country’s most outstanding drummer.

Krupa toured with Dorsey in 1944, but in the summer when he got word in San Antonio that his other charge had been dropped, he resigned and headed back to New York to form a new band. Through his tenure in the Dorsey Orchestra, he had acquired a taste for strings, so the new edition of the Krupa organization followed suit. The result was that “The Band That Swings With Strings” opened at New York’s Capitol theatre with seven brass, five reeds, four rhythm, nine strings, six

¹⁰⁴ Krupa, *International Musician*, September, 1972 cited in Klauber, 43.

¹⁰⁵ Crowther, 92.

vocalists and a second drummer, Joe Dale, who took over whenever Gene was conducting. While the new book included swing arrangements, the violins really held things back, and even the ballads were exceedingly bland. Krupa recalls, “Why did I add [strings]? I’d just come off the Dorsey band, and he must have had close to two dozen of them, and I guess I must have had the idea that I was a Kostelanetz or something. Do I regret it? Financially, yes. But it was a good experience.”¹⁰⁶ Simon wrote,

But it [this version of the band] was a tremendously disappointing experience for his fans, who had to take large doses of the new Krupa band with Gene concentrating on his new role of conductor. He played drums infrequently and generally unswingly, concentrating almost entirely on showmanship—fast technical stuff, complete with wild visual effects including dramatic lighting gimmicks and tom-toms for all his sidemen to bang on with pseudo-dramatic passion.¹⁰⁷

Despite the general opposition of jazz fans to string sections, other leaders, including Artie Shaw, Tommy Dorsey, and Harry James, tried them as well. These experiments failed largely because of balance. If it takes sixty string players to balance a string section in a symphony orchestra, how could twelve or fewer strings compete with the standard brass and woodwinds of a swing band? Gene Lees recalls the Harry James recording of “The Mole,” which included five strings: “There was something incongruous, even a little pitiful, in seeing these poor souls sawing away at their fiddles on the band platform, completely unheard.”¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ Simon, 310.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Lees, 10.

Krupa eventually abandoned the strings and went back to recording the kind of music that his fans appreciated more, big band swing. “Leave Us Leap,” written by his new “modern” arranger Eddie Finckel and featuring an example of “stop time,” became a popular instrumental hit. Mulligan particularly admired Finckel:

Eddie Finckel wrote some stuff for the band that was such good writing. There are charts that are rewarding to listen to and when you get done you say, “Damn, that made me feel good,” and Eddie wrote like that. There are a bunch of things of his in Krupa’s book. It was kind of the backbone of the book. I naturally fell into the same kind of groove. I loved the way he wrote and it was perfect for Gene. So, that more modern sound was primarily what Eddie was doing at that point.¹⁰⁹

“What’s This?,” a scat vocal duet featuring singers Buddy Stewart and Dave Lambert, was also a hit. To further enhance his public image, while the band was engaged at the Hollywood Palladium, Krupa appeared in another movie, *George White’s Scandals* (1945).

In the winter of 1944-45, Krupa appeared with Norman Granz’s “Jazz at the Philharmonic” in Los Angeles. Granz, eager to promote live jazz, produced a series of concerts featuring the best musicians available. His goal was to transport the idea of the after-hours cutting sessions, which ushered in the bebop era, to the public stage. The musical ensembles were to be racially integrated, and his intention was to not tolerate segregationists. In the series, Krupa appeared in the rhythm section of an all-star band and in a trio that accompanied Billie Holiday. The rest of the bill included performances by Coleman Hawkins, Anita O’Day, and Kid Ory’s band. Gerry Mulligan would also have an important association with Norman Granz.

Tenor saxophonist Charlie Ventura, who had already been in the band before Krupa’s marijuana arrest, rejoined in 1945. By the end of the year, *Downbeat* named

¹⁰⁹ Mulligan, oral history.

him “Number One Tenor Saxophonist.” He, Krupa, and pianist Teddy Napoleon performed as a trio that played “self-conscious, heavily stylized, seldom swinging renditions of tunes like ‘Dark Eyes’ and ‘Body and Soul.’”¹¹⁰

In mid-1945, Anita O’Day rejoined the band after being assured by Gluskin that there would be no strings and that both pianist Dodo Marmarosa and clarinetist Buddy De Franco had also been hired. She had recently completed a series of engagements with the Stan Kenton orchestra and welcomed the change. As she recalls, “Stanley was a gentleman, but working with him was like wearing a tight girdle. Working with Gene made you feel relaxed as if you were lounging around in an old kimono.”¹¹¹ As an arranger, Gerry Mulligan would also have the experience of working for both Krupa and Kenton. This time with the band, O’Day recorded such popular hits as Sy Oliver’s “Opus One” and “Boogie Blues.” She worked with Krupa until early 1946, when a major emotional breakdown caused by the pressures of touring and alcohol abuse forced her to quit. By the time she recovered, Krupa had replaced her with Carolyn Grey.

As bebop evolved, there was an initial tendency for the swing fans to be excluded from this new style of jazz, since it generally was too technically advanced for these audiences to appreciate. It simply was not meant for commercial consumption, and the early bebop stars were not household names. Therefore, initially, Krupa did not see bebop as a threat. In fact he had a rather open-minded view of it. Of Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker, he said that “. . . they sounded

¹¹⁰ Simon, 310.

¹¹¹ Crowther, 98.

pretty nice. . .” and that he welcomed young practitioners of bop in his band because he “liked keeping up with these young sons of guns.” More importantly, he discouraged antagonism between the various schools of jazz. “I like bop and I like Dixie . . . But let’s discourage bad musicianship, and I mean by that mickey-mouse bands. By merely fighting among ourselves, we’ve given those no-goods just that much more of a chance to get ahead of us.”¹¹²

So, in mid-1946 Krupa hired whom he considered to be several young disciples of bop, including Red Rodney (trumpet), Charlie Kennedy (alto saxophone) and Gerry Mulligan. Rodney had earlier performed with Mulligan in Elliot Lawrence’s band. Even though he was originally a Harry James-influenced swing trumpeter, while in the Lawrence band, he modernized his style after listening to Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker. It was while he played with Krupa (1946-47), that he gained recognition as an outstanding young bop trumpeter. Rodney was a member of the Charlie Parker quintet from 1949 to 1950, and his mastery of bop harmony can be heard particularly on a recording of the Carnegie Hall concert with that group.¹¹³

Despite Krupa’s willingness to experiment with adapting his band to the new music, he was unable to successfully master the bop drumming style. Bop drummers such as Kenny Clarke and Max Roach had completely altered the drummer’s role. For example, rather than using the bass drum to keep time, Clarke would play accents on it off the beat and would unexpectedly “drop bombs.” His rhythmic basis would

¹¹² Crowther, 101.

¹¹³ *Charlie Parker & Stars of Modern Jazz at Carnegie Hall (Christmas 1949) [LIVE]*, Jass Records, CD.

come from the ride cymbal and snare drum rather than from the bass drum. These and other major advances attributed to drummers such as Clarke, Roach, and Art Blakey made swing drummers like Krupa sound old-fashioned. Yet, despite his inability to play in the new style, he encouraged his young musicians to be progressive.

Krupa hired the eighteen-year-old Mulligan in February, 1946, for a tenure that lasted about one year. During that time, the young musician's role was to be an arranger, but he would occasionally fill in on both alto and tenor saxophone.

I filled in a couple of times playing – once when one of the guys got sick on the road and I took his place on tenor and another time when we left New York and we had a new alto player and Gene didn't like him at all – he just figured he couldn't cut it. So unfortunately, I had my new alto with me and got pressed into service whether I could do it or not. I must say though, that there were a bunch of good saxophone players in that band and I learned a hell of a lot because I had to. I really had to dig in because those were power players.¹¹⁴

Mulligan wrote approximately twenty-four arrangements for Krupa. In 1958, he recalls, “The Krupa band was the most professional band I'd ever written for. They were so professional they sometimes scared the hell out of me. They had no trouble playing anything I wrote. Having that skilled a unit to write for was a new and a challenging experience.”¹¹⁵ In reviewing the arrangements Mulligan wrote for Krupa, Peter Clayton notes,

In these arrangements can be heard Mulligan's characteristic concern for linear clarity and his overall functional approach to writing. In the years after, Mulligan—through his arranging for big bands and his own quartet—did a great deal to let more air into contemporary jazz scoring. He did not allow himself to be impressed with sound effects—

¹¹⁴ Mulligan, oral history.

¹¹⁵ Peter Clayton, Liner notes to *Gene Krupa Plays Gerry Mulligan Arrangements*, Verve 8292 1958, LP.

however massed and screaming—for their own sake, but preferred instead to make a large band flow and swing lightly but firmly with plenty of space for the men, in sections as well as in solo, to breathe.¹¹⁶

These characteristics can be heard in “Disc Jockey Jump,” a Mulligan original for the Krupa band. This was one of the several early Mulligan arrangements that helped him gain respect as an arranger before his talents as an instrumentalist were recognized. Like Juan Tizol’s “Perdido” for Duke Ellington, it is based on the chord progression of “You Can Depend on Me,” a 32-bar tune in popular-song form (AABA) written by Earl Hines in 1932. “Disc Jockey Jump” opens with an eight-bar introduction by the rhythm section that includes a hornlike passage by the piano in a style not unlike that of bopper Bud Powell. The melody, presented by a quartet of alto sax, tenor sax, trumpet, and trombone, is a long linear passage also characteristic of the bebop style (Figure 2).

The image shows a musical score for the opening of "Disc Jockey Jump". It features ten staves for different instruments: Sax 1 Alto 1, Combo Alto, Sax 3 Tenor 1, Combo Tenor, Sax 5 Baritone, Trumpet 1, Combo Trumpet, Trumpet 3, Trumpet 4, Trombone 1, and mbo Trombone. The score is written in 4/4 time and begins with an eight-bar introduction. The melody is primarily carried by the saxophones and trumpets, with a rhythmic accompaniment from the trombones and other instruments. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

Figure 2: Opening to “Disc Jockey Jump”

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

Alyn Shipton notes that the fluency in the ensemble writing is “redolent of the spontaneous improvisation that Gillespie’s saxophones were managing under Sonny Stitt or Howard Johnson’s leadership.”¹¹⁷ Mulligan had heard live performances of Gillespie’s big band while he was in Chicago writing for the Tommy Tucker band. Even though Krupa’s drumming is entrenched in the swing style, he ably handles the offbeat accents of the Mulligan arrangement. He also effectively accompanies the bop-leaning solos by Charles Kennedy (alto saxophone) and Don Fagerquist (trumpet). “Disc Jockey Jump” is both light and lively. At roughly 280 beats per minute, it is an arrangement that demonstrates that big band music can now be for listening rather than for dancing. Even though the arrangement, particularly the melodic line (Figure 3) and chord progression, resemble that of Woody Herman’s “Four Brothers,” Mulligan is quick to note that “It came before ‘Four Brothers’”¹¹⁸ by several months.



Figure 3: Opening to “Four Brothers”

Mulligan recalls how he was influenced by the small group format of bebop when writing “Disc Jockey Jump.” The chart incorporates both big band and bebop combo instrumentation. The front line, a quartet of alto and tenor saxophone, trumpet and trombone, plays the unison melody line, while the rest of the band provides the backup support. Each of the quartet players has solos. It was Krupa who compared his innovative approach to a concerto grosso. Mulligan recalls:

¹¹⁷ Shipton, 530.

¹¹⁸ Clayton.

The things that I had been listening to, like Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie and the small group they had, influenced pieces I wrote for Elliot's [Lawrence] band and for Krupa's band. I hadn't even really thought about what I was doing. Gene pointed it out. He loved what I was doing. He said it was like a concerto grosso idea: a small band out of a big band. I said, 'Yeah, that's terrific. What a good idea!' In fact, one of the titles he suggested for it was 'Quarteta Viva.' I said, 'That's not bad.' When he came up with 'Disc Jockey Jump,' I said, 'That's great, man. You call it that and all the disc jockeys all over the world will play it.'¹¹⁹

Mulligan's arrangement for Krupa of the 1940 Morgan Lewis/Nancy Hamilton song "How High the Moon" also demonstrates the forward-looking innovations of the young arranger. Charlie Parker, who had based many of his bebop melodies on the chord progressions of earlier standard songs, wrote "Ornithology" using the chord sequence of "How High the Moon." In Mulligan's big band arrangement, he has the saxophones quote Parker's "Ornithology" in the second chorus, a nod of recognition to bebop's most famous practitioner. In the arrangement of this song for Krupa, Mulligan eliminates the opening fanfare he had included (probably to pace the dancers) in the arrangement of the same song for Elliot Lawrence. Instead, Krupa opens the song with a swinging solo high-hat vamp. In Klinkowitz's review of the arrangement he says,

A lighter, tighter rhythm section gives the impression of everything taking place more quickly, and the second-time-through statement of Charlie Parker's "Ornithology" theme prepares listeners for the emphasis of the alto sax, trombone, trumpet, and tenor sax solos that follow. No more fanfare announcements here—just solid blowing over the scale, with a quick nod at the end of each solo to the next instrument, helped along by the briefest of orchestral introductions.¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ Mulligan, oral history.

¹²⁰ Klinkowitz, 18.

Like “Disc Jockey Jump,” Mulligan’s arrangement of “How High the Moon” is also characterized by tight saxophone section harmonies of long melodic lines in the bebop style.

Several of Mulligan’s arrangements for Krupa, including “Bird House” and “Birds of a Feather,” are obvious tributes to the work of Charlie Parker, whose nickname was “Bird.” “Bird House” is an early example of a big band piece that uses elements of bebop improvisation as its foundation. It is an imaginative chart mainly because its main theme is strung together from fragments of Parker-like solos. “Birds of a Feather” starts with a Parker-style alto saxophone (Figure 4: Opening to “Birds of a Feather” solo (Figure 4) and then the trumpets take over with a bop-like melody.



Figure 4: Opening to “Birds of a Feather”

Mulligan also wrote an effective arrangement of “Yardbird Suite” for Krupa, one of the earliest examples of a Parker original scored for big band.

The arrangements often exhibit an element of wit and, judging from Mulligan’s comment below, remind some of the work of Jimmie Lunceford, not only with respect to their humor but to their rhythmic vitality as well. Songs such as “Rhythm Is Our Business,” “I’m Nuts about Screw Music,” “I Want the Waiter

(With the Water),” and “Four or Five Times” are examples of Lunceford’s playful sense of swing. Mulligan responds, “Actually, guys at that time asked me if I’d heard Lunceford, and I hadn’t. But I had heard several of the white bands who had been influenced by Lunceford.”¹²¹ Mulligan’s sense of humor is particularly exhibited in three arrangements for Krupa: an original, “Mulligan’s Stew,” and arrangements of two old standards, “Sometimes I’m Happy” and “Margie.” “Mulligan Stew” exhibits humorous interplay between the trumpets in their high registers and the saxophones in their low registers with sassy injections by the trombones. Clayton points out that “Gerry had left ‘Mulligan Stew’ untitled, and the title it finally received made him vow that would be the last time he wouldn’t title a song of his himself.”¹²²

“Sometimes I’m Happy” is a particularly odd display of Mulligan humor. The first two notes of the melody are presented by the saxophones followed by a mocking answer by cup-muted trumpets in vaudevillian style. The phrase is punctuated by a single note blatted by the baritone saxophone in its lowest register. Klinkowitz compares Mulligan’s statement of the melody with that of the original Youmans-Caesar-Grey standard:

The melody Mulligan delivers is as recognizable as a face might be in one of Picasso’s more extreme cubist portraits, or perhaps as a human countenance can be discerned within the artfully arranged plate of fruits and vegetables painted by Arcimboldo. An even better image might be that of junk sculpture, and Mulligan’s rendering of the tune’s familiar line invites comparison with the era’s junk sculptor in big-band music, Spike Jones.¹²³

¹²¹ Clayton.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Klinkowitz, 22.

While the statement of the first phrase is a demonstration of Mulligan’s crafty zaniness, the second phrase, in contrast, is surprisingly smooth. The arrangement also includes solos by alto saxophone and trumpet that are accompanied by saxophone riffs in the style of the quirky melody. The same sort of playfulness is demonstrated in “Margie,” in which the two syllable name is presented first by saxophones, then trumpets, and then trombones, all three times in different registers. Humorous interaction between the sections continues throughout the arrangement.

Mulligan named one of his Krupa compositions “The Way of All Flesh” after the Samuel Butler book of the same title that he had recently read. The book is a satire that savages Victorian bourgeois values. The arrangement is characterized by particularly rich voicings in the trombone section with baritone saxophone. The melody is an appealing ascending sequence (Figure 5). Here Mulligan, at age nineteen, is showing his evolution towards a style that is more concerned with texture and sound than with brash instrumental gymnastics. Despite its prettiness, it still swings.



Figure 5: Opening to “The Way of All Flesh” melody

Gerry Mulligan’s big band charts for Gene Krupa demonstrate the burgeoning creativity of the young composer/arranger. He is thoroughly conscious of

the techniques of his predecessors such as Duke Ellington and Fletcher Henderson and draws upon their innovations. He is also greatly influenced by the many band-leader soloists, and his arrangements therefore provide a splendid canvas for improvised art. Klinkowitz notes that Mulligan “loves to feature a sweet trombone showcased more like Tommy Dorsey’s than Glenn Miller’s, though there are plenty of chances for hard blowing that a player like Jack Teagarden would appreciate.”¹²⁴ But his fascination with bebop provided his greatest influence, a fact that is clearly evident in his Krupa arrangements. Despite the often fiery nature of bop, Mulligan manages to create an open texture that is fresh, articulate, and modern. He also seems to have a disregard for employing techniques just because they are fashionable. With the exception of “Disc Jockey Jump,” the Krupa arrangement tempos are rather relaxed, yet he is able to keep Krupa’s drumming integral without its sounding old-fashioned.

Mulligan’s independent streak would occasionally cause problems within the band. He recalls a difficult situation in Akron, Ohio:

I was playing second alto. Well, Harry Terrell was the lead alto man. He always ran a kind of tight ship. It felt a little military. I was the arranger for the band and I was impatient a lot of times playing shows, four or five shows a day, playing these ballad things. In fact, some of them I wrote, but I was always changing my notes, you know, or I’d make a [improvised] line out of it. It used to drive Harry crazy that I was always changing these things. One show in Akron, Ohio, he got so mad at me that after the first show, the curtain had just come down, man, and he turned around and he put his horn down and he lunged for me. We went over the chairs and he was trying to strangle me. They pulled him off of me and I think after that Gene assembled the band and he realized that there was a lot of tension in the band. So, he said, “I will not condone these perfunctory performances,” and I promised

¹²⁴ Klinkowitz, 24.

Harry I'd try to play the notes and not mess around with them and drive him to distraction. So, I was good for awhile.¹²⁵

In retrospect, Mulligan felt that his year with Krupa benefited him. It was a tremendous learning experience, not only about composing, arranging, and playing, but about personal relationships as well. Mulligan respected Krupa and especially appreciated the fact that most of his arrangements were recorded by the bandleader. In turn, Krupa admired Mulligan as well, not only because of his talent, but because he knew what he wanted and was assertive about it.

Mulligan's work with Krupa resulted in several innovative arrangements reflecting the bop style within a big band framework. Examples include "How High the Moon" and "Disc Jockey Jump." Eventually Mulligan's quick temper and intolerance of subpar playing led to his being fired. Hentoff explains the circumstances:

The band had been working and traveling frenetically, and its playing in Mulligan's opinion had become shoddy. One night, at the end of a set, Mulligan rose and, in plain hearing of the audience, upbraided the band in general and then Krupa in particular for his inability or unwillingness to set higher standards. "I told them all to go to hell," Mulligan recalls. At a meeting of the band the next day, Krupa lit into the band first, and then into Mulligan for inexcusable behavior in public. Krupa proceeded to fire Mulligan, but he did not hold a grudge against his former employee. "I had to admire that guy," Krupa said a few years later. "You get too much obsequiousness in this business. There was no obsequiousness in him, which I dug."¹²⁶

¹²⁵ Mulligan, oral history.

¹²⁶ Nat Hentoff, *Jazz Is* (New York: Random House, 1976), 115.

Claude Thornhill Orchestra

So finally, when the war was over and Claude [Thornhill] came back [from the Navy] and I heard that he was reorganizing [his band], I was coming back from somewhere. I can't even really be sure what period this was, you know, like a lot of these episodes. For me the time factor is mixed up. I can't remember if it was before Gene [Krupa] or after Gene. So, anyway, I come back to New York and I'm staying at the Edison Hotel. I had a room that was on the back of the building, which meant it faced the back of all these other buildings. So there was like a great big air shaft between the buildings. And the first morning that I'm there, I hear music. I open my window and I say, "My God, that's just like Claude Thornhill's band. It must be somebody playing records or something somewhere," and I listen. They play the thing through, and they start playing the thing again and they stop. I say, "My God, they're rehearsing!" and it turns out my room was just about over where the [Thornhill] rehearsal hall was. . . . [My friend] Buckwheat showed up in my room and he had some good Texas pot or something, you know, so we'd sit there and smoke and listen to Thornhill's band as they were rehearsing, for the whole week. For the whole week, every morning and in the afternoon, the band would be rehearsing.¹²⁷

A period of difficulty and frustration for Mulligan began in 1947. In Philadelphia, he briefly studied music theory and harmony with a private teacher. "I went to a teacher in Philadelphia, Cox I think his name was and he taught the Schillinger system."¹²⁸ This lasted only two weeks because he was too accustomed to learning by observation and experimentation rather than by prescribed methods, and besides, the authors of the books had no knowledge of jazz. He continued to shuttle between New York and Philadelphia for performing and arranging opportunities that happened to arise. While in New York, since bands were everywhere, he would often spend entire days going from one rehearsal to another.

¹²⁷ Mulligan, oral history.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

It was during this period that Mulligan switched from playing clarinet, alto saxophone and tenor saxophone to exclusively baritone saxophone.

Well, I suppose it must have been after the Krupa Band that I did it. I hung out for some time with a baritone player named Johnny Dee who played with Frankie Carle's band. He was very interested in horns for their own sake. I don't know if it was anything that Johnny said, or if he had an influence on me or what it was. I can't recall but it seemed like a pretty arbitrary thing to do. I took the old horns that I had - my alto and my tenor and my clarinet - and sold them, and decided I was just going to play baritone. I never really understood why I did it. I wasn't playing baritone with Ike Carpenter. I wasn't playing baritone with Krupa's band ever. So, it was just kind of one of those left field decisions that I've never been able to rationalize in any way, but that's what I did. And that was the beginning of it. I started going to jam sessions and played nothing but baritone. When I worked with a band, it was on baritone.¹²⁹

He favored the instrument not only because of its range, power and timbre, but also perhaps because of the practical fact that baritone playing was somewhat of a niche skill in a jazz world saturated with super-talented alto and tenor players.

As he became more comfortable with his newly adopted instrument from a performance perspective, he began to recognize the baritone saxophone's possibilities from an arranger's standpoint. Many of the bands that he liked had been using the baritone saxophone for its melodic possibilities. "You know, it wasn't just the bottom note instrument in the ensemble; but a lot of the bands, a lot of the arrangers that I liked used the baritone in a way that was very melodic."¹³⁰ He cites Duke Ellington as a prime example of an arranger who would often write the melody line for the trumpet and an opposing counter melody for the baritone saxophone. "There was a lot of contrary motion in these two lines and then you could figure what the rest of the

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

section is doing based on these two main lines. So, that means that the baritone line was essential to the ensemble.”¹³¹ Ellington would often voice his baritone saxophonist, Harry Carney, out front which Mulligan also found appealing.

Mulligan also points to Ozzie Nelson’s effective treatment of the instrument.

For instance, Ozzie Nelson had a very good band, a very musical band. Each band tried to develop its own style, or something recognizable in the style, so that when people heard it, they would be able to know it was Harry James, or Ozzie Nelson or Will Osbourne or you know, whoever. The sound in the Ozzie Nelson band was an ensemble. It was very straight ahead kind of writing for the ensemble, but with a baritone sax obligato wandering through it. They used this device a lot and it really worked. It was a unique sound.¹³²

He is critical of most of the bands that, when a fifth or baritone saxophone was added, “stuck it on the bottom like a tuba, which you know, can be boring to play.”¹³³

Mulligan was also enamored of the human quality of the baritone saxophone’s timbre.

If you’ve got something interesting in the ensemble to present, the baritone has a great register for it. It’s like the cello in an orchestra, which has a beautiful register in relation to the whole ensemble. In fact, when people ask me, ‘Well, why did you choose baritone instead of alto?’, I say, ‘Well, if I had been a string player in my youth, I probably would have chosen cello over the violin for the same reason.’ There’s just something about the register that you are attracted to, that you choose to play in. The cello and the baritone are both very much *human* voice registers.¹³⁴

Mulligan got a chance to apply these and other developing approaches to his writing when he worked for Claude Thornhill starting in mid 1947. Thornhill’s chief

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

arranger, Gil Evans, who would turn out to be a major influence on Mulligan, and who had previously met the youngster, suggested that he settle in New York for awhile. As Mulligan recalls, “Anyway, Gil sent me this postcard that said, ‘What are you doing in Philadelphia? Come to New York where everything is going on.’ So, I did and that’s when I started writing for them.”¹³⁵

In the 1940s, Claude Thornhill (1909-1965) led a highly regarded band. As George Simon, editor-in-chief (1939-1955) of *Metronome* wrote,

For sheer musical beauty, for gorgeous musical moods, for imagination and wit and taste and originality and consistently fine musicianship, there was never a band that could match Claude Thornhill’s. It was gentle yet virile, soft yet strong, subtle yet bright, witty yet profound. And in all these characteristics, it reflected much of the personality of Claude Thornhill himself, one of the warmest, one of the vaguest, one of the most talented and one of the most charming men I have known.¹³⁶

Thornhill studied at the Cincinnati Conservatory and Philadelphia’s Curtis Institute before coming to New York in the early thirties. He spent the rest of the decade building his reputation through his arranging and piano-playing work for bandleaders such as Benny Goodman, Hal Kemp, Andre Kostelanetz, Freddy Martin, Russ Morgan, and Ray Noble. In October 1938, Thornhill moved to Los Angeles after being hired by the Bob Hope organization to write arrangements for the Skinnay Ennis band on Hope’s *Pepsodent Show*.¹³⁷

This marked the beginning of Thornhill’s association with Gil Evans. At the time, Evans, who had already been working for the Ennis band, was overloaded with

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Simon, 433.

¹³⁷ Stephanie Stein Crease, *Gil Evans Out of the Cool, His Life and Music* (Chicago: A Cappella Books, 2002), 65.

responsibilities: rehearsing and arranging for both the Hope show band and the Ennis dance band. As Crease observes, “Gil was constantly under pressure to come up with arrangements. At no other time in his career was he under such duress to constantly write appropriate material in such a range of styles or with such commercial bent.”¹³⁸ When Thornhill arrived, he wrote most of the vocal arrangements for the Hope show while Evans wrote the show’s instrumental numbers, some of the vocal numbers, and almost all of the Ennis band’s dance arrangements. The two of them became close and, as Evans later told Nat Hentoff, he learned a lot from Thornhill. He recalls, “Claude had a unique way with a dance band. He’d use the trombones, for example, with the woodwinds in a way that gave them a [French] horn sound.”¹³⁹

The Ennis orchestra was very busy in the fall of 1939 accompanying the Hope show as well as performing at various prestigious venues such as the Mark Hopkins in San Francisco and the Hugo in Hollywood, when Thornhill decided to quit and form his own band. Carmine Calhoun, one of the band’s vocalists as well as Ennis’ wife, recalls, “When we left to go up to San Francisco, Claude didn’t want any part of that. He didn’t want to just travel around with us as an arranger; he was too important a musician, so Alex Holden helped him get his own band started.”¹⁴⁰ Thornhill returned to New York carrying a stack of arrangements that he had written for his band-to-be and began recruiting musicians.

¹³⁸Ibid., 64-5.

¹³⁹ Nat Hentoff, "I'm No Granddaddy: Gil Evans," *Downbeat*, May 16, 1957, 12.

¹⁴⁰ Crease, 72.

He indicated that the style of music that his band would be playing would be different when he said, “It seems to me that touch and tone are pretty much overlooked by pianists who are leading bands nowadays. You can get so many more and better musical effects if you pay attention to those little, shall I say, niceties.”¹⁴¹ Gunther Schuller notes two differentiating factors that would determine the future course of Thornhill’s pre-war band:

One was Thornhill’s clear recognition that what the world needed in 1940 was *not* another riff-tune swing band in the image of Goodman or Miller. Second, an ASCAP ban which prevented the use of all copyrighted ASCAP material on the radio forced big bands to look for repertory material in the public domain. Once again, as in the mid-1930s, the popular works of classical composers like Tchaikovsky, Grieg, Dvořák, Sinding and traditional tunes like “Auld Lang Syne,” “Londonderry Air,” and “Stack of Barley” were recruited and transformed into dance arrangements. Thornhill went about this with a vengeance and—it must be said—with more taste and skill than most. At the same time, his own compositions, often classically oriented—like the hypnotic, impressionistic tone “poemlet,” “Snowfall”—answered to this trend and need.¹⁴²

The initial twelve-member Thornhill band consisted of a disproportionately large reed section. There were two clarinetists, four saxophonists who also doubled on clarinet, only two trumpets and one trombone, bass, drums, and Thornhill on piano. By February 1940, Thornhill’s new band began performing in public and the jazz press reacted favorably. *Metronome* featured it in its Showcase column:

Thornhill’s New Troupe Good Hotel Prospect—Unique Clarinet Feature Should Attract Lovers of Pure, Sweet Dance Music. ... uniqueness in having two men whose job is to play only clarinet. Around these two rests the distinctiveness of the orchestra, for they are employed not only to produce a fresh woodwind section (probably the

¹⁴¹ Simon, 434.

¹⁴² Gunther Schuller, *The Swing Era, The Development of Jazz, 1930-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 755.

richest and most brilliant in any dance orchestra today) but also to add unique tone coloring to the ensemble and to supplement the brilliance of the relatively small brass section.¹⁴³

Thornhill would use the six reed players in various combinations: six clarinets, a flute and five clarinets voiced over a one-finger piano line, two bass clarinets and four clarinets, etc. He would suggest ideas about voicings to his arrangers and oversee the results.

A particularly distinctive feature was that Thornhill often had all his wind instrumentalists (reeds and brass) play without vibrato. Evans described the result as “That distinct haunting no-vibrato sound.”¹⁴⁴ Thornhill was also obsessed with presenting a wide dynamic range, an especially differentiating feature. As Simon writes,

Of all its qualities of fine musicianship, the one that set the band several notches above almost all others was its magnificent use of dynamics. It would achieve a soft, mellow mood, either through Claude’s extremely delicate, one-fingered piano solos or through six delicately blown unison clarinets; then suddenly it would burst forth into a gorgeous, rich full ensemble sound, highlighted by the brilliance of Conrad Gozzo’s lead trumpet.¹⁴⁵

Mulligan credited Thornhill with “having taught me the greatest lesson in dynamics, the art of underblowing” and he described the Thornhill sound as “controlled violence.”¹⁴⁶ Within the context of a dance band, Thornhill was able to produce a rich, almost orchestral sound, and as Schuller notes, “some of the opaque

¹⁴³ Crease, 75-6.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 75.

¹⁴⁵ Simon, 435.

¹⁴⁶ Ted Gioia, *The History of Jazz* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1997), 281.

orchestral textures and blends, rich harmonizations and dense voicings, were completely novel, never having been heard before in either jazz or classical music.”¹⁴⁷

Thornhill’s popularity skyrocketed in March 1941 after the band was booked into the prestigious Glen Island Casino in New Rochelle, New York, a venue that had also been a launch pad to success for numerous other big bands of the 1930s, including those of Glenn Miller, Charlie Barnet, Les Brown, and the Dorsey brothers. Simon’s May 1941 *Metronome* review of the Glen Island performance reflected the appeal of the band’s unique sound: “The style, the first really new one to emerge in recent years, and one that often borders on modern, classical music, is a Thornhill creation. ... That ensemble is a joy to hear.”¹⁴⁸ Barry Ulanov’s 1942 review praises Thornhill’s willingness to take risks:

There aren’t many bandleaders who will even think about experimentation. Claude Thornhill’s whole band is built around new ideas. And so Claude deserves acclaim for his rare quality as an experimenter, if nothing else. But there is a lot else. Mr. T has done a topnotch job in whipping his organization into shape as an all-around performing body that can knock off ballads and jazz and novelties and strange fruits of the strange brain of Thornhill with equal facility.¹⁴⁹

Prior to Glen Island, most of the band’s charts had been written by Thornhill and Bill Borden. The success of this engagement allowed Gil Evans to be hired as an additional arranger. Evans, who was torn between the commercial success of the Ennis band and the new sound and critical acclaim of the Thornhill band, initially split his time between both organizations.

¹⁴⁷ Schuller, 756.

¹⁴⁸ Crease, 85.

¹⁴⁹ Barry Ulanov, "Claude's Clever Crew Rates Rave", *Metronome*, Oct. 1942, 20.

It was during the August 1941 engagement at Glen Island that Thornhill added two French horns to the band. Evans recalls their debut performance: “He [Claude] had written an obligato for them [the horns] to a Fazola [clarinet] solo to surprise Faz. Faz got up to play; Claude signaled the French horns at the other end of the room to come up to the bandstand; and that was the first time Fazola knew they were to be added to the band.”¹⁵⁰

In his 1981 dissertation on Thornhill’s 1940s bands, Patrick D. Castle takes a close look at the elements of style that dominated the sound of the ensemble. With respect to instrumentation, Castle sees Thornhill’s addition of horns as a way to deal with the inherent balance problems of large dance bands. The typical dance band of the day had up to ten brass and only three to five woodwinds, with the result being that during ensemble passages, the woodwinds are virtually inaudible due to the power of the brass section.

One approach that Thornhill used to counter this condition was to avoid the standard brass-dominated instrumentations and increase the woodwind section to six members with only five brass (three trumpets and two trombones). At a point when Thornhill did augment the brass section, in July of 1941, he did so by adding two French horns which had a high degree of compatibility with the woodwind section. This came at a time when many dance bands were increasing their ranks by adding trumpets and trombones that had the capability of great dynamic power, but which lacked the ability to balance with the woodwinds at forte dynamics.¹⁵¹

Thornhill elevated the role of the woodwinds by giving them, rather than the brass, thematic material and thereby placing them in the foreground. The French horns

¹⁵⁰ Crease, 85-6.

¹⁵¹ Patrick Douglas Castle, “Aspects of Style in the Repertory of the Claude Thornhill Orchestra: 1940-1948” (D.M.A. diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1981), 34.

were often combined with the clarinets to play the lead line in unison while the saxophones homophonically provided harmonic support. The clarinets would usually be scored in the middle or lower register in contrast to Glenn Miller's much brighter clarinet lead. Gil Evans recalls the band's approach to orchestration on ballads:

There was a French horn lead, one and sometimes two French horns playing in unison or duet, depending on the character of the melody. The clarinet doubled the melody, also playing lead. Below were two altos, a tenor, and a baritone, or two altos and two tenors. The bottom was normally a double on the melody by the baritone or tenor. The reed section sometimes went very low with the saxes being forced to play in a subtone and very soft. . . . Claude's use of no-vibrato demanded that the register be lowered. Actually, the natural range of the French horn helped cause the lowering of the register. In addition, I was constantly experimenting with varying combinations and intensities of instruments that were in the same register.¹⁵²

Schuller calls the Thornhill ballads "lush impressionistic mood pieces—reminiscent of Ellington's 'Mood Indigo.'"¹⁵³

Gioia views the Thornhill band as a "jumble of contradictions: it was sweet and hot by turns: progressive and nostalgic—both to an extreme; overtly commercial, yet also aspiring to transform jazz into art music. . . . Jazz historians, not knowing what to do with this range of sounds, prefer to regulate Thornhill to a footnote and dismiss him as a popularizer or some sort of Claude Debussy of jazz."¹⁵⁴

From a young age, Gerry Mulligan was attracted to the sound of Thornhill's pre-war band, with or without horns. He recalls,

When I was a kid, I started getting Thornhill records because the sound of the band was beautiful. I always thought that Claude

¹⁵² Ibid., 5-6.

¹⁵³ Schuller, 756

¹⁵⁴ Gioia, 281.

approached writing for a dance band as if it were an orchestra, even though there were no strings. A lot of the times people thought there were French horns in the band and there weren't. In the early band it was just five brass, and the four saxes, plus two clarinets. He managed to get that orchestral sound that way. It was the clarinets that did it, not the French horns. Later on he added the French horns because that enhanced the thing and gave it more depth.¹⁵⁵

Castle also studied Thornhill's approach to vibrato, since it had been noted by others that the absence of vibrato was a characteristic of Thornhill's work. He observes that Thornhill had several different approaches to vibrato rather than simply eliminating it altogether. He points out that there is a relationship between register, dynamics and the use of vibrato. "When the clarinets are in their upper register and at forte or fortissimo dynamic, vibrato is used. When the clarinets are in their lower register, and at piano or pianissimo dynamic, then no vibrato is used. This lack of vibrato in the lower register and at a soft dynamic is the Thornhill style that Gil Evans has referred to and which was often used in ballad and foxtrot arrangements."¹⁵⁶

Unlike most other bands of the pre-war era, Thornhill's brass (trumpet and trombone) section had more of a supporting role, and its most frequent use was as background to either woodwinds/horns or Thornhill's light piano improvisations. Often the brass players would play into felt-lined hats in their lower or middle registers. This would change at climactic sections when the brass would dominate tutti playing at a much higher dynamic level.

Thornhill's obsessive focus on texture, timbre, unusual voicings, nonstandard instrumentation, counterpoint, interplay, and mood would influence the musical development of Gil Evans in the early forties and Gerry Mulligan in the late forties.

¹⁵⁵ Mulligan, oral history.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 37.

By the end of the decade, the Thornhill sound would serve as a model for the music Evans and Mulligan would create for the 1948-49 Nonet with Miles Davis—the music that would eventually be released on Davis’ seminal album *The Birth of the Cool*. As will be discussed in detail in the Miles Davis chapter, the concept of the Nonet arose after discussions began in Evans’ 55th Street Manhattan apartment about the smallest number of instruments that could express the harmonic range achieved by the Thornhill band. In his autobiography, Miles Davis remembers that “*The Birth of the Cool* album came from some of the sessions we did trying to sound like Claude Thornhill’s band. We wanted that sound, but the difference was that we wanted it [the ensemble] as small as possible.”¹⁵⁷ The result was an ensemble comprising one each of trumpet, alto saxophone, French horn, trombone, baritone saxophone, tuba, piano, bass, and drums.

Charles Garrod’s discography credits Gil Evans with contributing twelve arrangements to Thornhill’s 1941-42 band, including “Arab Dance,” “Be Careful,” “It’s My Heart,” “Buster’s Last Stand,” “I Don’t Know Why (I Just Do),” “Moonlight Bay,” and “There’s a Small Hotel.”¹⁵⁸ Thornhill alternated his lush ballads with swing pieces, and Evans’ very popular “Buster’s Last Stand” is an up-tempo (> 250 beats per minute) arrangement with a propulsive drive. “Arab Dance” is a swing arrangement of “Divertissement: Arabian Dance” from Act II of Tchaikovsky’s *The Nutcracker*. Crease describes how the piece unfolds:

¹⁵⁷ Miles with Quincy Troupe Davis, *Miles: The Autobiography* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989), 118.

¹⁵⁸ Charles Garrod, *Claude Thornhill and His Orchestra* (Portland, OR: Joyce Record Club, 1996), 78.

After a soft introduction stated by trombones and French horns, with quiet toms and bass accompaniment, the woodwinds play a rhythmically displaced, almost boppish statement of the first theme, expanding into an ensemble burst. Following the clarinet solo, the orchestra enters in a staggered fashion, revealing a brilliantly architected motivic development that culminates in a full ensemble statement. The band subsides as Claude enters on piano, then the brass and the saxes rally in a blues-oriented shout chorus, with fluid descending lines from the saxes that sound startlingly Ellingtonian.¹⁵⁹

It is interesting to note that Evans' "Arab Dance" precedes "Arabesque Cookie (1960)," Ellington's version of the same Tchaikovsky work, by eighteen years.

As the war continued, it became difficult for Thornhill to maintain the high quality of his ensemble as many of his musicians were being drafted. The band's operation came to a complete halt on October 26, 1942, when Thornhill enlisted in the Navy at the lowest possible rank, apprentice seaman. *Metronome* reported, "The quietest entrance yet into the armed forces is that of Claude Thornhill. No fanfare about the band breaking up, no advance publicity of the great band to come in the Navy. For Claude Thornhill has entered the Navy as an ordinary citizen, with no strings attached, whatsoever—so far as he is concerned, he's not going to have a band, no great starts are coming to join him."¹⁶⁰ During his three years of service, he spent part of the time playing in a band led by Artie Shaw. He also helped organize special shows and bands to entertain troops on recently captured locales in the Pacific, and as a result, worked closely with Admirals Nimitz and Halsey. Thornhill's band remained popular during the war and his records continued to sell.

¹⁵⁹ Crease, 91.

¹⁶⁰ *Metronome*, October 1942, cited in Crease, 97.

Evans was drafted on February 25, 1943, and initially became the pianist for the Southern California Sector Headquarters Band, a ten-piece group that played three radio shows per week and at various daily functions for every branch of the service.¹⁶¹ Eventually his various service assignments took him to the east coast and while on furlough, he managed to visit the 52nd Street clubs in New York where he most likely first heard bebop performed live.

After his discharge in 1946, Thornhill restructured his orchestra and many of his former sidemen, including Evans, who had returned to California after his discharge, rejoined the band in New York. After five days of cross-country train travel, Evans arrived in New York.

I got off the train, got in a taxi and went right to 52nd Street. I threw my bags in the checkroom at the Three Deuces and walked up and down the street between 5th and 6th where all the clubs were. This whole thing on 52nd Street was fantastic! And exactly what I wanted to have happen happened. I met Bud Powell, Erroll Garner, Ben Webster and Pres [Lester Young] all on that first night—Dizzy had his big band. I didn't know anybody and nobody knew me. . . . Welcome to New York!¹⁶²

From the mid 1930s through the late 1940s, the two blocks of 52nd Street between Fifth and Seventh Avenues came to be known by such names as “Swing Street,” the “Street That Never Slept,” and “Montmartre of New York,” but most often just “The Street.” It was the home of about a dozen former speakeasies which had been converted to now legendary jazz clubs such as the Onyx, the Famous Door, the Hickory House, Jimmy Ryan's, Leon and Eddie's, the Three Deuces, and the 21 Club. Starting in the thirties, many prominent jazz musicians, both black and white,

¹⁶¹ Crease, 98.

¹⁶² Ibid., 126.

performed there including Sidney Bechet, Jimmy Dorsey, Fats Waller, Woody Herman, Art Tatum, Jack Teagarden, Count Basie, Charlie Barnet, and Billie Holiday. Alyn Shipton notes that “In almost all memoirs and interviews dealing with musicians who worked on the street, there is a sense of wonder that such an array of talent should have appeared with such intensity in so small an area.”¹⁶³ Vibraphonist Milt Jackson recalls,

On 52nd Street, in those two blocks, you could hear so many artists. It was unbelievable. You might catch Billie Holiday in the Onyx, go up the street to the Three Deuces where Charlie Parker was playing with his group. Three doors away there was Coleman Hawkins, and Art Tatum was playing another club just up the street. It was just remarkable and totally unbelievable.¹⁶⁴

Beginning in 1943, as jazz audiences began to stop dancing and start listening, the sound of bebop, which had originally been heard in the after-hours clubs of Harlem, was now being performed regularly in the clubs on 52nd Street. In early 1944, Dizzy Gillespie brought a combo to the Onyx club with Oscar Pettiford on bass, Max Roach on drums, and, because Bud Powell was not available, the young white pianist, George Wallington. Charlie Parker arrived on 52nd Street in September 1944 for an engagement at the Three Deuces. Gioia observes that bebop, “now resurrected from the after-hours clubs and jam sessions of its early days, was legitimized by its presentation in quasi-‘respectable’ venues.”¹⁶⁵ Miles Davis remembers bebop’s southward migration:

¹⁶³ Shipton, 410.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Gioia, 217.

What was happening was white people, white critics, were now beginning to understand that bebop was some important shit. They began talking and writing a lot about Bird and Dizzy, but only when they played on The Street. I mean they wrote and talked about Minton's [in Harlem], but only after they had made The Street the place for white people to come to and spend a lot of money to hear this new music. Around 1945 a lot of black musicians were playing down on 52nd Street, for the money and the media exposure. It was around this time that the clubs on 52nd—like the Three Deuces, the Onyx, the Downbeat Club, Kelly's Stable, and others—started being more important for musicians than the clubs uptown in Harlem.¹⁶⁶

Davis first played on The Street in 1945: "I played with Lockjaw Davis's group for a month at the Spotlight on 52nd Street. I had been sitting in with him a lot up at Minton's so he knew how I played. Around that time . . . I started sitting in with Coleman Hawkins's band at The Downbeat Club on 52nd Street. Billie Holiday was the star singer with the group."¹⁶⁷

As now chief arranger of the Thornhill band, Gil Evans became one of The Street's most important neighbors when he moved into a fourteen-by-twenty-five basement apartment at 14 West 55th Street in the summer of 1946. As Evans recalls,

It was one big room. It had a piano and a bed and a record player and a tape player. In those days it was a weird tape machine, a great big thing you turned on and the needle vibrated on the vinyl and made a record for you, so it was more of a home recorder. Claude Thornhill bought it but left it with me because he never had any use for it. That's all there was in the place—and a sink. So I rented the place and then just left my door open for two years. I never knew who was going to be there when I got home, and I didn't care.¹⁶⁸

Mulligan has vivid memories of the physical layout of Evans' residence.

¹⁶⁶ Davis, 67.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 66.

¹⁶⁸ Crease, 128.

It wasn't really an apartment. It was a big basement room. To get into it, you go down five steps of an entry-way. To the left is a Chinese laundry. You go behind the laundry and make a dog-leg turn and go into the giant room with pipes running through the ceiling. There were a few steps up to a little back courtyard, which was an air space more than anything, and a fence. It looked like it was out of *My Sister Eileen*, only no curtains on the window. There was a sink on the right and a little compartment where the toilet was. As you went in the door, the bed was in front of you, the piano was to the right.¹⁶⁹

Because of Evans' "open-door policy" and the apartment's proximity to 52nd Street, within a few months, Evans began getting an incessant stream of unannounced visitors, Gerry Mulligan included. Mulligan became part of a nucleus of regulars that included other aspiring young composers and arrangers such as George Russell, Johnny Carisi, and John Lewis—all beginning to make their marks on the modern jazz scene. While at Evans' apartment, the group would conduct non-stop musical discussions. Mulligan recalls, "It was a special time, to be part of a scene like that where a whole bunch of young people gravitate together by some kind of mutual interests. Even as diverse as our individual approaches were to it, our main interest was focused around music and ways to improve it and improve ourselves. Johnny Carisi and I were always at each other's throats. It was very intense."¹⁷⁰

The discussions involved all things musical, but as Evans recalls, "sound" was the focus, particularly how it could be controlled with such musical elements as orchestration and harmony. He remembers,

We talked a lot about harmony—how to get a "sound" out of harmony. Because the harmony has a lot to do with what the music is going to "sound" like. The instruments have their wave form and all that, but the harmony means that you're putting together a group of

¹⁶⁹ Lees, 88.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

instruments, and they're going to get their own independent wave form, right? You can't get it any other way except as an ensemble playing together.¹⁷¹

Pianist and arranger Gene DiNovi, who was a regular visitor, viewed Evans' apartment as the birthplace of a new movement in modern jazz.

And it was in the apartment, of course, that what became known as "the cool" was born. We never used the term, indeed never even heard it. . . . You might see Bud Powell at the piano, playing a Bach invention in his own way. One night Charlie Parker came to the door and asked for five dollars for his cab fare. He listened to Prokofiev's *Scythian Suite* on the phonograph and said "I don't even scratch the surface."¹⁷²

Several of Thornhill's more progressive sidemen, such as drummer Billy Exiner, guitarist Barry Galbraith, and alto saxophonist Lee Konitz, would also count themselves as frequent Evans guests. Dizzy Gillespie and Max Roach were frequent visitors, and starting in the summer of 1947, Charlie Parker often crashed at the apartment. He had returned to New York in March 1947, after being released from a six-month sentence at Camarillo State Hospital in California. Parker had been confined there after being arrested on July 29, 1946, for, among other things, arson and indecent exposure following a disastrous recording session. Miles Davis observed that "Bird never had time to listen to what Gil did, because for Bird, Gil only provided him with a convenient place to eat, drink, shit and be close to 52nd Street."¹⁷³ Mulligan remembers that whenever he saw Parker at the apartment, he was asleep.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Ibid., 89.

¹⁷³ Davis, 116.

Mulligan, Evans, Russell, and others frequented the Three Deuces to hear Parker's new quintet which featured a young Miles Davis. Before long, Davis started showing up at Evans' apartment as well. He recalls the situation, including Mulligan's disposition:

Gil's basement apartment over on 55th Street was where a lot of musicians hung out. Gil's place was so dark, you didn't know whether it was night or day. Max, Diz, Bird, Gerry Mulligan, George Russell, Blossom Dearie, John Lewis, Lee Konitz, and Johnny Carisi used to be at Gil's all the time. Gil had this big bed that took up a lot of space and this weird motherfucking cat who was always getting into everything. We would always be sitting around talking about music, or arguing about something. I remember Gerry Mulligan being very angry at the time, about a lot of shit. But so was I, and we would get into arguments sometimes. Nothing serious, just testing each other's shit. But Gil was like a mother hen to all of us. He cooled everything out because he was so cool. He was a beautiful person who just loved to be around musicians. And we loved being around him because he taught us so much, about caring for people and about music, especially arranging music. I think Bird even stayed there for awhile. Gil could put up with Bird when nobody else could.¹⁷⁴

According to Mulligan, George Russell was the group's "resident innovator." He had been Benny Carter's drummer when he decided to leave the band in order to entrench himself in the New York jazz scene, and he was clearly inspired by the Evans apartment marathon discussions. He codified the modal approach to harmony in his theoretical treatise, *Lydian Chromatic Concept of Tonal Organization* (1953) after he was inspired by a 1944 remark Miles Davis made to him in New York: "Miles said that he wanted to learn all the changes and I reasoned that he might try to find the closest scale to every chord."¹⁷⁵ Russell achieved recognition when he

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 122-23.

¹⁷⁵ Giddins, 5-6.

incorporated these innovative ideas on harmony in late 1947 for the Afro-Cuban “Cubana-Be/Cubano-Bop” for Dizzy Gillespie’s big band. Davis would later popularize Russell’s ideas in his recordings of songs such as the ones on the album *Kind of Blue* (1959). Russell likened Gil’s apartment to a school: “It was like an esoteric school and Gil was the school master. The key thing to come out of it was that we were all encouraged to reach for the impossible. That was the esthetic of the time and especially in that group. It was a centering place. . . . One would be lucky to see things through Gil’s eyes.”¹⁷⁶ With respect to Mulligan, Russell recalls that their group sessions sometimes exacerbated the young man’s frustrations, while at other times they had a calming effect. He tells Nat Hentoff,

Mulligan was there all the time. He was very clever, witty, and saucy, the way he is now. I remember his talking about a musician who was getting a lot of attention by copying another. “A Sammy Kaye is bad enough,” Gerry said. “A bastard Sammy Kaye is too much.” Gerry had a chip on his shoulder. He had more or less the same difficulties that made us all bitter and hostile. He was immensely talented, and he didn’t have enough of an opportunity to exercise his talent. Gil’s influence had a softening effect on him and on all of us. . . . As for Gil’s musical influence on Gerry, I think that Gerry, with his talent, would have emerged as a major force in jazz anyway. His talent would have surmounted his lack of formal education. . . . Gerry was better able than any of the rest of us to channel Gil’s influences—including the modern classical writers, whose records Gil played—into mainstream jazz. Gerry was always interested in the way each of us felt about music, but he was impatient with anything that moved too far away from the mainstream.¹⁷⁷

Mulligan himself took a philosophical view of life at Gil’s. He and his compatriots existed in a different world, separate from the mainstream society that did not understand them. They were marginalized and underappreciated and maybe that was

¹⁷⁶ Crease, 133.

¹⁷⁷ Nat Hentoff, “Profiles (Part 1),” 86.

fine with them. It was a bohemian lifestyle which fostered the development of their perhaps radical ideas about music. They all look back at those days as being very important. Mulligan reflects,

So, for all of us it felt like a transient existence. We were all trying to find some place for ourselves. The theorizing was a natural result of that. We lived much more in our ideas than we did in the physical reality.

We'd walk out of the place, and of course you're right next to 5th Avenue, and we'd taken the kind of exaggerated bohemian attitude toward life, living in the middle of 5th Avenue and 55th Street. We were so out of place, it was funny. Miles and I would walk down the street and people would stare at us and look at how peculiar we looked. And Miles would get so mad because people were staring and I said, "Well, you've got to admit man, we're a pretty strange looking pair wandering around here."—to which he had to agree and he laughed.¹⁷⁸

It was during the period of time when the discussions at Evans' apartment were taking place that Mulligan became addicted to heroin. When he arrived in New York, he was young, naïve, and completely wrapped up in music. "But the longer I was there in New York and in this period, life was such turmoil, constantly moving and you know the frustration involved. I started not having any idea of what the hell I was doing or where I was going." Eventually, he started to react more to his environment, making contact with "some of the seamier elements including those involved with pot and junk." As Miles Davis attests, drug abuse was quite common around New York's music scene in the late forties.

There was a lot of dope around the music scene and a lot of musicians were deep into drugs, especially heroin. People—musicians—were considered hip in some circles if they shot smack. Some of the younger guys like Dexter Gordon, Tadd Dameron, Art Blakey, J. J. Johnson, Sonny Rollins, Jackie McLean, and myself—all of us—

¹⁷⁸ Mulligan, oral history.

started getting heavily into heroin around the same time *despite* the fact that Freddie Webster had died from some bad stuff. Besides Bird, Sonny Stitt, Bud Powell, Fats Navarro, Gene Ammons were all using heroin, not to mention Joe Guy and Billie Holiday, too. There were a lot of white musicians—Stan Getz, Gerry Mulligan, Red Rodney, and Chet Baker—who were also heavily into shooting drugs.¹⁷⁹

Mulligan recalls taking heroin for the first time in 1947 or '48 when “a friend of mine thought I’d like to try the stuff.”

And somebody I knew was using heroin and I got a hold of some and I said, “Wow, what a great thing!” I can sit for eight or ten hours at a stretch and write without being distracted. And so it started as an aid to keeping down all of the unwelcome emotional feelings and my real inability to react to people in a constructive way. And it was a way of withdrawing into my own writing, so I could spend as much time as I wanted.¹⁸⁰

This worked for a short time, but after a few months, the dreadfulness of the situation settled in when he realized that once one builds up a habit that requires a source, it becomes a fulltime occupation just keeping supplied. “But the worst thing about it was that it was so time consuming. And my focus changed. I didn’t have time for the music anymore, the very reason that I got started using it.”¹⁸¹ This comment notwithstanding, Mulligan was still somewhat able to earn an income in music. “Krupa still had a big band and I’d write some arrangements for him occasionally. So that was income. . . . Elliot Lawrence had a band so I wrote for him. So there were things that I was able to do to support myself.”¹⁸² Through his relationship with Gil Evans, Mulligan also started writing and playing for the post-war Thornhill band.

¹⁷⁹ Davis, 129.

¹⁸⁰ Mulligan, oral history.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Ibid.

The late forties was not the most promising time for Thornhill to re-form a big band since the swing era appeared to be over after the war. Gunther Schuller observes that “the [post-war] decline of big bands, though partly economic in cause, is also very much traceable to the fact that the idiom began to exhaust itself creatively. The old formulas were staggering from musical overweight, from malfunctioning parts, creaking joints, blindness, and old age.”¹⁸³ Count Basie’s band suffered from financial difficulties until it disbanded in 1950. For the next two years, Basie led a six- to nine-piece group until he established a scaled-down big band in 1952. Benny Goodman assembled his last touring band in 1947 with the intention of performing and recording new bop-style arrangements. Goodman did not particularly like the bebop style, but he was enamored enough with the progressive playing of saxophonist Wardell Gray and trumpeter Fats Navarro that he featured them in his new sextet. Goodman, however, continued to play in a classic style and, in 1949, disbanded his orchestra as soon as his contract with Capitol lapsed. Tommy Dorsey struggled to keep his band together until eventually he had to re-unite with his brother Jimmy. The resulting new version of the Dorsey Brothers Orchestra stayed together through the early fifties. The Jimmie Lunceford Orchestra continued for a year after Lunceford’s death in 1947. Duke Ellington, on the other hand, survived the post-war years intact, and Schuller contends that “one could even put the case that he successfully survived the big-band crash and continued to enrich the medium of orchestral jazz until his death in 1974.”¹⁸⁴

¹⁸³ Schuller, 260.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

Despite the demise of big band music, Thornhill's post-war organization managed to keep busy through 1948. He was engaged frequently at prestigious New York venues such as the Hotel Pennsylvania, the Strand Theater, and the Glen Island Casino. The band also toured all over Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Indiana. George Simon of *Metronome* said that "In many ways the new band was even better than the old. The rhythm section, sparked by bassist Iggy Shevack and drummer Billy Exiner, helped propel a looser, more swinging jazz beat. Bob Walters, the only new addition to the reeds, supplied a wonderfully warm sound. And soon a girl singer named Fran Warren came along to bring even greater emotional depth to the band."¹⁸⁵ In 1947 and 1948, the band made the charts with Warren on "You're Not So Easy to Forget," "Love for Love," "Early Autumn," and "A Sunday Kind of Love," the Thornhill's biggest commercial hit ever.¹⁸⁶ Even Thelonious Monk, the often misunderstood but formative influence on modern jazz, said that the Thornhill band was "the only really good band I've heard in years!"¹⁸⁷

Gil Evans kept very busy as arranger, and eventually, de facto musical director of the Thornhill orchestra. Thornhill kept giving him more and more responsibilities, and by 1947 he was essentially running the band. Not only was he writing most of the band's new arrangements, but he was scheduling and conducting rehearsals as well. At this point, Thornhill did little more than front the band at live performances. This situation allowed Evans to take a more experimental approach to

¹⁸⁵ Simon, 438.

¹⁸⁶ Crease, 147.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

the new arrangements that the band would play. It also allowed him to add a tuba in the person of Bill Barber, hire progressive players such as alto saxophonist Lee Konitz, tenor saxophonist Brew Moore, and trumpeter Red Rodney, and to commission arrangements from George Russell, Johnny Carisi, and Gerry Mulligan.

As Crease points out, despite Thornhill's diminishing role, his influence on Evans was profound and integral to the scores he would write as his career progressed. "That influence involved three key facets: orchestrations that had roots in classical and contemporary classical music, rather than in big band dance music; a constant refinement of specific combinations of sounds and instruments to express a mood; and the idea that sound itself was the primary element in music."¹⁸⁸ This idea that sheer sound takes prominence over even melody and rhythm, would guide Gerry Mulligan's development as an arranger as well.

Evans, who was captivated by the music of Charlie Parker, combined the lush sound and textures of the Thornhill band with the propulsive musicality of bebop when he wrote arrangements for various bop tunes such as Parker's "Anthropology," "Yardbird Suite," and "Donna Lee" (written by Miles Davis). Arranger Johnny Carisi admired Evans' approach to the Parker arrangements, particularly his notation technique:

The Parker things were a relatively late development in the band. Gil really had an affinity for bop applications, for that kind of rhythmic displacement in the music. Those scores were some of the best of Gil's things. He could really notate the way you would play them exactly. So if you could read them exactly, that's how they would sound, just as if you'd improvised a line, even if the whole band was playing it. Gil spent a lot of time just doing that.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁸ Crease, 147.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 144.

Evans was meticulous about notation since most of his musicians were inexperienced in the bebop style. The articulation indications were meant to ensure a stylistically correct interpretation.

With the bop arrangements, Evans retained the Thornhill elements related to sound, such as dynamics and timbre, but added new characteristics related to the bebop idiom: rhythmic complexity, long eighth-note sections, articulation that emphasizes subdivision of the beat, and focus on improvised solos. In his dissertation on Thornhill's style, Castle notes that "The articulations, as used by Evans, give dynamic stress to what would be conventionally considered weak rhythmic positions. This is a departure from Thornhill's style in which stress, both agogic and dynamic was given to strong rhythmic positions. The difference in stress gave the Evans arrangements significantly less rhythmic stability than the Thornhill or Bill Borden arrangements."¹⁹⁰

In "Anthropology" and "Yardbird Suite," Evans has the horns present the melody in unison or octaves in a similar fashion to the way the "head" or main theme was presented by the smaller bebop groups. Despite the much larger scale of the Thornhill band, including a variety of woodwinds, French horn, and tuba, the ensemble does not overstate. Crease observes that it sounds "as intimate as a chamber group."¹⁹¹ The improvised choruses expose the soloists' knowledge (or lack

¹⁹⁰ Castle, 54-55.

¹⁹¹ Crease, 153.

thereof) of the bop style. While Konitz was quite at home, trombonist Tak Takvorian showed an obvious lack of familiarity with the idiom.

Regarding “Donna Lee,” Miles Davis recalls how the song was responsible for initiating his long and fruitful association with Evans:

It was through “Donna Lee” that I met Evans. He had heard the tune and went to see Bird about doing something with it. Bird told him that it wasn’t his tune but that it was mine. Gil wanted the lead sheet for the tune in order to write an arrangement of it for the Claude Thornhill orchestra. I met Gil Evans for the first time when he approached me about arranging “Donna Lee.” I told him he could do it if he got me a copy of Claude Thornhill’s arrangement of “Robbin’s Nest.” He got it for me and after talking for awhile and testing each other out, we found out that I liked the way Gil wrote music and he liked the way I played. We heard sound in the same way. I didn’t really like what Thornhill did with Gil’s arrangement of “Donna Lee,” though. It was too slow and mannered for my taste. But I could hear the possibilities in Gil’s arranging and writing on other things, so what they did on “Donna Lee” bothered me less, but it did bother me.¹⁹²

Lawrence McClellan notes how Evans’ arrangement of “Donna Lee” anticipated the sound that he and Davis would achieve later.

It replicates the sound of a jazz quintet, with the melody stated by reeds and muted trumpets in unison over the rhythm section. This chart features solos for tenor sax, trombone, and guitar. Barry Galbraith’s guitar solo especially stands out in this chart. Following Galbraith’s solo, the band’s shout chorus near the end of this arrangement displays Evans’ talent for scoring beautifully shifting tonal colors in tutti passages. This chorus, along with the tag, clearly foreshadows the sound of Miles Davis’ “Birth of the Cool” sessions that followed a few years later.¹⁹³

According to Klinkowitz, Evans’ “Yardbird Suite” for Thornhill was recorded while Mulligan was still with Gene Krupa (1947), and “it prompted Mulligan to try

¹⁹² Davis, 104.

¹⁹³ Lawrence McClellan, *The Later Swing Era, 1942 to 1955* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2004), 78.

his own hand with the number for Krupa.”¹⁹⁴ Mulligan’s version follows the song’s original 32-bar standard form (AABA).¹⁹⁵ After an eight-bar piano introduction, the first “A” section is presented by softly muted trumpets playing in tightly-packed harmony with the baritone saxophone providing a subtle but appealing anchor two octaves below. This is repeated, and then the bridge is offered in a contrasting color by a cutting solo alto saxophone in the Charlie Parker style. The muted trumpets return to close out the final eight bars of the chorus. The entire second chorus is an alto saxophone improvised solo accompanied by the rhythm section. Mulligan then alternates the remaining choruses between repetitions of the first sixteen bars of head followed choruses of improvised solos by trumpet, tenor saxophone and trombone. The bridge of each repetition of solo chorus is accompanied by the saxophone section playing tightly harmonized long tones. The rather conservative nature of the arrangement with minimal variation from chorus to chorus perhaps was required by Krupa to satisfy his audiences. Despite this, Mulligan’s arrangement of “Yardbird Suite” highlights his concentration on texture and his commitment to giving big-band scores an intermittent subtlety between the blazing solos. He would take these signature traits to the Thornhill arrangements.

Evans’ scoring of “Yardbird Suite” demonstrates not only his modern music influences, but the freedom granted to him by Thornhill, for it is much more progressive than Mulligan’s alleged later version.¹⁹⁶ It begins with a presentation of the first sixteen bars of the melody by Thornhill on piano in the key of G major. The

¹⁹⁴ Klinkowitz, 27.

¹⁹⁵ *Gene Krupa Plays Gerry Mulligan Arrangements*, Verve MG 8292 LP, 1958.

¹⁹⁶ *The Very Best of Claude Thornhill*, Xelon Entertainment 2009, CD.

brass loudly answers each eight-bar phrase with an ascending figure. Then there is a sudden modulation to the flat VI (Eb major) as the entire ensemble states the melody. Evans' version of the melody is ornamented with bop-style figures, rhythmic displacements, and progressive harmonies. The improvised solos provided by alto sax and trumpet emulate the styles of Parker and Gillespie with their double-time sections and extended harmonies. The solo sections are alternated with imaginative shout choruses.

The scores that Mulligan wrote for Thornhill under Evans' direction demonstrate the young arranger's evolutionary progression resulting from his late-forties New York influences: the people with whom he associated as well as the bands he heard perform. Four of his more important arrangements for Thornhill were recorded in April 1953 and released as *Two Sides of Claude Thornhill* (Kapp KL-1058). The album's title aptly implies a double meaning; side A includes six of Thornhill's calm and delicate arrangements from the early forties, while side B is devoted to the livelier Mulligan arrangements: "Jeru," "Five Brothers," "Poor Little Rich Girl," and "Rose of the Rio Grande." "Jeru," a Mulligan original, would be re-scored for the Miles Davis Nonet, recorded in January 1949, and later released on *The Birth of the Cool*. Other Mulligan arrangements for Thornhill that were re-scored for the Davis Nonet include "Godchild" and "Joost at the Roost." "Jeru" is the most innovative of his arrangements for Thornhill, particularly with respect to its approach to rhythm, harmony and texture. "I was a little adventurous and that ['Jeru'] was one of the more adventurous ones, breaking out of the 8 bar phrase. 'Jeru' and 'Godchild' were the two things [original charts] where I started to do things that really interested

me. ‘Jeru’ just came about because it sounded that way. I let the structure evolve out of almost an improvised form. If a line wanted to extend itself I would let it go.”¹⁹⁷

“Jeru” represents one of the earliest examples of changing time signatures in jazz.

After two statements of the melody in the first sixteen bars by the saxophones, the bridge is presented with the meter changing from one measure of 4/4, to one measure of 3/4, to one measure of 2/4, to four measures of 3/4, to one measure of 6/4 to four measures of 4/4 (Figure 6). These last four measures serve as a break for a tenor saxophone solo.

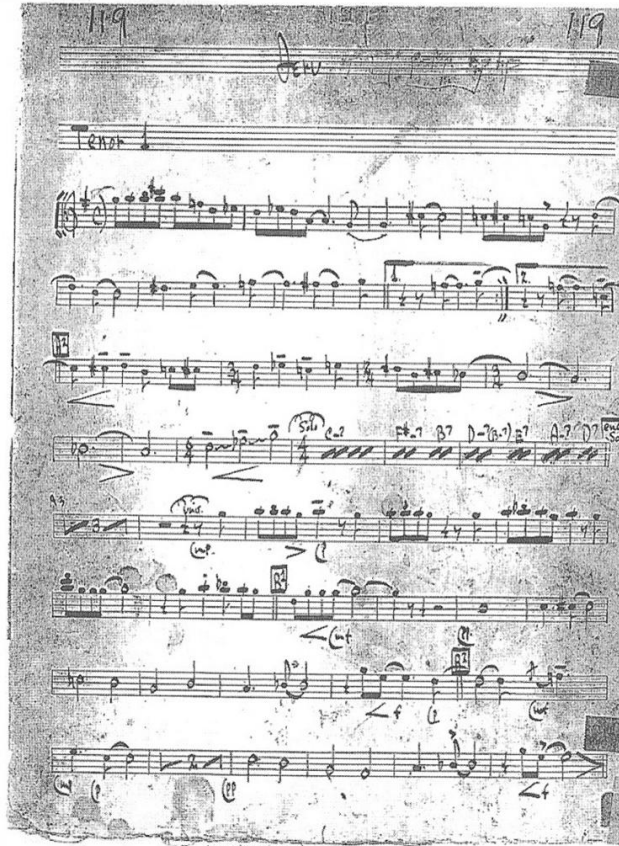


Figure 6: “Jeru,” from arrangement for Thornhill Orchestra: 1st Tenor part (p. 1)¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁷ Mulligan, oral history.

¹⁹⁸ Claude Thornhill Collection of Drury University, Springfield, Missouri.

Mulligan explains that these irregular meters came about to support the melody. “In the bridge it’s all constructed around a melodic structure, not around a rhythm pattern and not around rhythm duration. You know, it’s like not an eight bar phrase. It’s broken up into segments that all reflect what’s going on in the melody.”¹⁹⁹ When the melody is presented again later, the metrical pattern is a hemiola, where three bars in 4/4 are articulated as if they were four bars in 3/4. The unusual chord progressions, altered pitches, substitutions, and non-standard voicings demonstrate Mulligan’s movement to a more modern harmonic idiom. The song concludes with a pattern of descending fifths altered in various ways (i.e., sharp 9, flat 5) terminating with a peculiar but appealing voicing of the tonic chord: Ebmaj7b5. Lewis Porter points out that the “Jeru” melody is a quotation of the end of Lester Young’s solo on “Sometimes I’m Happy (1944).”²⁰⁰ The name “Jeru” was Miles Davis’ nickname for Mulligan. “Miles always called me Jeru. That was his nickname for me. At that period, all of my different friends had different names for me. Miles always called me Jeru, so the people around Miles always called me Jeru.”²⁰¹

“Rose of the Rio Grande,” written in 1922 by Edgar Leslie, Harry Warren, and Ross Gorman, had been a ballroom standard almost always performed as a vocal number. Mulligan begins his instrumental arrangement with an inventive polyphonic introduction which, after eight bars, cleverly morphs into the upbeat statement of the melody. The subsequent solo choruses by alto saxophone, muted trumpet, and tenor

¹⁹⁹ Mulligan, oral history.

²⁰⁰ Lewis Porter, “Some Problems in Jazz Research,” *Black Music Research Journal*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (Autumn, 1988): 204.

²⁰¹ Mulligan, oral history.

saxophone are augmented by interplay with the rest of the ensemble. The shout chorus that follows features tight modern harmonies with boppish melodies. Despite these innovations, Mulligan manages to keep the original melody intact. “Swing House,” which Mulligan would write and arrange for Stan Kenton in 1952, and which he would re-arrange for his later pianoless quartet with Chet Baker, is based on the chord progression of “Rose of the Rio Grande.”

“Poor Little Rich Girl,” another song that originated in the twenties, was written by Noël Coward for the musical revue *On with the Dance* (1924). Mulligan’s lively instrumental arrangement is rife with rhythmic effects including hemiola and shifts. The dynamics and subsequent excitement of the score build from the first chorus when the melody is presented by solo piano embellished by section fills. His original ensemble support for the solo choruses performed by muted trumpet and tenor saxophone provides a novel contrapuntal effect. Mulligan remembers that this was one of his first charts for Thornhill: “So, I started arranging for them [Thornhill and Evans]. I guess my first arrangement for them was “Poor Little Rich Girl,” which Claude liked a lot. So, they used to use that as the opener from then on and kind of the warm-up piece.”²⁰² The song replaced Thornhill’s classic signature tune “Snowfall” as the opener.

“Five Brothers” is Mulligan’s reaction to the Jimmy Giuffre composition “Four Brothers,” which was made a hit by the Woody Herman orchestra in 1947. “Four Brothers” features three tenor saxophonists (Stan Getz, Zoot Sims, Herbie Steward) and Serge Chaloff on baritone saxophone. Each “brother” plays a solo culminating in a swinging soli section. Mulligan’s arrangement, featuring the

²⁰² Ibid.

Thornhill saxophone section, is a brisk and lively chart. The two solos on alto and tenor saxophones are wrapped neatly within the context of Mulligan's tight orchestration. The snappy arrangement provides a welcome contrast to the more placid Thornhill arrangements on side A. Mulligan would later re-work this arrangement into a brisk, contrapuntal composition for his fifties pianoless quartet with Chet Baker.

Except for the short period of time when he wrote for Stan Kenton in 1952 and his attempt at launching a conventionally orchestrated big band in 1957, Mulligan's arrangements for Thornhill would be his last big-band creativity until he formed his "Concert Jazz Band" in 1960. After Thornhill, he turned his attention to smaller ensembles, beginning with the Miles Davis Nonet in 1948. His big-band charts with Lawrence, Krupa, and Thornhill would serve as a base of material that would be re-engineered for his inventive smaller groups of the 1950s. As a result, his innovations that had often been obfuscated by the big-band format of the forties will shine through when they are integrated into the various smaller-group configurations. These reduced forces allow more attention to be drawn to Mulligan's progressive harmonies and moving melodic lines. Klinkowitz notes that the Gerry Mulligan Sextet of the fifties exists in embryo within such arrangements for Lawrence as "Elevation," "Apple Core," "The Swinging Door," and "Mr. President." "Here can be heard the relaxed melodic interweavings that would later characterize the sextet's four lead horns, together with the complex voicing used for Lawrence's sax section that—scored for baritone, tenor, trumpet, and trombone—would yield Mulligan's

most personally identifiable sound in the 1950s.²⁰³ These Lawrence arrangements sound more natural in the context of the sextet particularly when the solo work of such fine instrumentalists as Bob Brookmeyer (valve trombone), Zoot Sims (tenor sax), John Eardley (trumpet) and Mulligan (baritone sax) is integrated so seamlessly with the ensemble sections.

While Evans' and Mulligan's progressive arrangements for Thornhill were popular on the New York scene, the band began to suffer commercially. Dancers who came to hear Thornhill's pre-war lush ballads and fox trots were baffled by the new styles represented in Evans' and Mulligan's charts. Eventually, in the summer of 1948, the continued deterioration of the dance band market coupled with the Thornhill's personal problems, including his worsening affliction with alcoholism, forced the ensemble to temporarily cease operations.

Meanwhile, Mulligan, Evans, Johnny Carisi, John Lewis, George Russell, and Miles Davis had been actively discussing new concepts related to applying the principles they had been advancing with their recent Thornhill charts to a much smaller band. The idea would be to create the luxuriant sonority of the Thornhill sound in a more agile ensemble. Miles Davis remembers:

My conversations with Gil about experimenting with more subtle voicing and shit were exciting to me. Gerry Mulligan, Gil, and I started talking about forming this group. We thought nine pieces would be the right amount of musicians to be in the band. Gil and Gerry had decided what the instruments in the band would be before I really came into the discussions. But the theory, the musical interpretation and what the band would play, was my idea.²⁰⁴

²⁰³ Klinkowitz, 36.

²⁰⁴ Davis, 116.

Mulligan recalls, “We were already talking about a dream band, the arranger’s ideal band; that was what we were looking for.”²⁰⁵ Over the next two years, Gerry Mulligan would be one of the chief engineers of this “dream” band and its output.

²⁰⁵ Crease 156.

Miles Davis Nonet

We were already talking about a dream band, the arranger's ideal band; that was what we were looking for. We finally came up with a cut down version of the Thornhill band, even though we didn't exactly start out thinking that way. The musical direction ultimately fell into place when Miles became interested because Miles was our choice to play lead anyway. And it's kind of fascinating that we loved the way Miles played, even though at the time he was *not* widely respected as a trumpet player. Most people thought he didn't have his technical stuff together. Well, he didn't. He was approaching the trumpet in a different way—he didn't have that real trumpet sound that was the convention in the big bands or that kind of brass sound that Dizzy had—it was a totally different thing. Of course the thing we liked about it was his lyrical melodic sense, which a lot of people didn't really hear yet. Miles, hearing our conversations [at Evans' apartment], started to think about how he could get it operating. Miles made the move to materialize it and had all the relationships with people that he wanted in it that I never would have thought of—Max Roach [on drums], for one, Max was perfect in that band. And Miles was at a point where he wanted to do something on his own. So he was the one that made all the phone calls and called the rehearsals and that kind of freed the rest of us up, especially me, because I was the one that did most of the writing.²⁰⁶

Initially, the ensemble was to function simply as a rehearsal band, a band of experimentation, and so there were no commercial aspirations. The instrumentation, as conceived by Mulligan and Evans, would consist of nine pieces, despite the fact that Evans had already sketched some charts for an eleven-piece band. There would be four brass (trumpet, trombone, French horn and tuba), two saxophones (alto and baritone), and a three-piece rhythm section (piano, bass, and drums). The guitar and second trumpet that Evans envisioned in his original conception would be eliminated. Evans recalls, "The instrumentation was caused by the fact that this was the smallest

²⁰⁶ Mulligan, oral history.

number of instruments that could get the sound and still express all the harmonies that Thornhill had used.²⁰⁷

Given that the clarinet was so fundamental to the Thornhill sound, Mulligan and Evans had considered including it in the ensemble instrumentation.

Gil and I always figured that the ideal instrumentation should have a clarinet in it. There are a number of reasons for that. A clarinet is a good high voice. It has a stress factor different than that of a high trumpet. A trumpet plays at a high A, above the treble clef. It [the high A] has got a great deal of angst in it. A clarinet can play that same note with such ease that it's pastoral. So, this is what we're considering—the dramatic possibilities, and so the clarinet should be part of it. It gives us an organic upper register for the band. This means that with clarinet, alto [saxophone] and trumpet, we can work those three voices together in numerous ways.²⁰⁸

Mulligan actually had a particular clarinetist in mind, one who specialized in the Albert system of keywork and fingering rather than the more common Boehm system. He recalls, “As it turned out, the only clarinet player we really wanted to have was Danny Polo. Danny was the clarinet player with Claude’s band and the band was on the road too much for him to make any of the rehearsals and be part of the record dates. It was just logistically impossible, so we dropped the idea.”²⁰⁹ Unlike Benny Goodman and Artie Shaw, Polo played the Albert system clarinet, following in the footsteps of such New Orleans performers as Sidney Bechet, Johnny Dodds, Jimmy Noone, and Barney Bigard. While the Albert system clarinets were more difficult to play than their counterpart Boehm system instruments, Mulligan preferred their sound.

There was nobody that we knew of as a substitute [for Polo]. A lot of that was probably because Danny used the Albert system which was quite a different instrument than the Boehm system of clarinet. You’ll

²⁰⁷ Crease, 157.

²⁰⁸ Mulligan, oral history.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

hear the sound difference very quickly as you compare Benny Goodman's sound with, say, Jimmy Noone's. Noone had a big wide sound, and in his case it was kind of flat like the side of a barn. But anyway it was a big wooden sound. Benny's clarinet sounded like it was being played through a very stopped pipe. Well, in order to develop the Boehm fingering, which was a fingering device for a flute, they had the idea of putting it on the clarinet because it would constitute a simplified fingering. The fingering of an Albert system was killer. Really, a bastard of an instrument to master. So, in order to do that, they had to change the size of the instrument. They had to change it for tonality. So, the pipe of the Boehm system was a smaller pipe than the pipe of the Albert system. That made a lot of difference to us as far as the timbre of the ensemble was concerned. Had somebody been around who played really good Boehm and who was available, we probably would have thought better of it. But there wasn't anybody around and we didn't go looking. So, that was that.²¹⁰

Mulligan remembers that the decision to go with one trumpet rather than two had more to do with Davis's participation than with the availability of a suitable second trumpet player. "We wound up holding it to one trumpet because, if Miles were to be the trumpet, his sound was so personal that we didn't want it to have to blend with another trumpet sound."²¹¹ This arranging philosophy of capitalizing on the uniquely personal sounds of individual players is, in some ways, a reflection of the approach of Duke Ellington who wrote parts to fit idiosyncratic capabilities of each of his sidemen. Mulligan's arranging for the Nonet would also involve different combinations of instruments, another characteristic of Ellington who would often score passages to be played by groupings of instruments drawn from different sections of the band.

In retrospect, Mulligan reflects that, perhaps, using two trumpets might have given Davis an occasional well-deserved spell of relief. "We could have used a

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Ibid.

second trumpet. Miles had his horn in his face a lot during the course of the night. You know, he played solos and he played lead and he was playing backgrounds. So, it really is an awful lot for one player to do.”²¹²

Davis’s stature as a trumpeter had been advancing as he evolved from a Charlie Parker sideman to a trumpeter/bandleader with a new distinguishable sound. When Parker returned to New York in 1947 after his release from Camarillo Hospital, he formed a quintet consisting of Duke Jordan (piano), Tommy Potter (bass), Max Roach (drums), and Miles Davis. The recordings of this group demonstrate that Miles had developed his own voice. Dan Morgenstern notes that “Unlike most modern jazz trumpeters, he eschewed Gillespian runs and pyrotechnics. There was no need for flamboyance when playing with Parker. Instead, Davis offered contrast. It was an indication of the barely 21-year-old’s sensibility and musicality that he could follow Parker’s staggering solos with personal inventions of his own.”²¹³

Davis’s first recording session as a leader came in August 1947 with a group consisting of Parker (tenor saxophone), John Lewis (piano), Nelson Boyd (bass), and Roach.²¹⁴ Morgenstern observes that “It’s not just the sound of Parker’s tenor that makes these sides different. The themes, all by Miles, are more structured than most of Bird’s, the harmonic schemes more complex, and the general atmosphere more relaxed. . . .Parker was the prime source of Davis’s confidence.”²¹⁵ Davis recalls:

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Dan Morgenstern, "The Complete Prestige Recordings," in *The Miles Davis Companion*, ed. Gary Carner (London: Schirmer Books, 1996), 9.

²¹⁴ *The Complete Savoy Studio Session*, Miles Davis All Stars, Savoy 1947.

²¹⁵ Morgenstern, 9.

I think that Savoy record with Bird was my best recording up until that time. I was getting more confident in my playing and was developing a style of my own. I was getting away from Dizzy's and Freddie Webster's influences. But it was at the Three Deuces, playing every night there with Bird and Max [Roach] that really helped me find my own voice.²¹⁶

The public's perception of Davis's approach to playing continued to advance, and within a year, in a notable series of articles on bebop for *Record Changer* magazine, Ross Russell wrote: "Miles Davis may be said to belong to the new generation of musicians. There is now a mounting body of evidence that Davis is leading the way to, or even founding, the next school of trumpet playing."²¹⁷ Mulligan was among those who appreciated Davis's approach, and he sought to exploit it in the context of his arrangements for the Nonet. "Let the trumpet sound be *his*. It became an easy thing for me to write for because I could hear Miles melodically."²¹⁸ Later, Martin Williams assessed Davis' playing for the Nonet: "[Davis] was finding a superb and individual solo voice, partly by acknowledging his technical limitations and working within them, and also through an ability to imply bop rhythms in his time without stating them directly."²¹⁹

With respect to the basic instrumentation of six horns, Mulligan seemed to believe that it worked rather well, and that the result produced a unique ensemble sound.

It also offered lots of possibilities which we really didn't explore to any great extent. We didn't write that much for it. There are probably only 15 or 20 charts that we contributed. That's from all of us who

²¹⁶ Davis. 104.

²¹⁷ Morgenstern, 9.

²¹⁸ Mulligan, oral history.

²¹⁹ Pete Weldin, original liner notes to *The Complete Birth of the Cool*.

wrote for it. So, it didn't go on long enough for us to really pursue it to the extent that we might have. But we had two high voices [trumpet and alto saxophone], two middle voices [trombone and French horn], and two low voices [baritone saxophone and tuba], so that they can be used in different ways, contrapuntally and breaking up different [combinations] of small ensembles or small unisons. So, it did indeed offer the possibilities we were looking for—the most latitude for the writer with the most freedom and best setting for the soloist. That was the basis of it, and that was the result of a lot of theorizing.²²⁰

The Nonet instrumentation gave the group's arrangers over six octaves to work with. “. . . we wanted a continuous chromatic scale for the band, from the very bottom to the very top. Not having a clarinet or flutes restricted us on top. You know, it went as far as the trumpet went. Ideally, we would have been able to go above that and that was why I'd always wanted to have a clarinet.”²²¹ With this continuous range of sound, Mulligan developed various orchestration techniques to carefully combine instruments. For example,

The baritone [saxophone] was a flexible link which could work with the third or fourth voice (French horn and trombone) and it (baritone sax) is the only instrument that really connects with the tuba. The tuba and baritone could work together as a unit, which wouldn't have the same kind of tuba blur, as when you put a trombone with it (tuba). The trombone clarifies the tuba sound so it loses a lot of the amorphous quality that is useful in a tuba in the low register of an ensemble.²²²

Gil Evans was especially interested in how the arranger could voice the six horns to create a sense of intensity as well as relaxation. He remarks:

Consider the six horns Miles had in a nine-piece band. When they played together, they could be a single voice playing a single line—one-part writing in a way. But that sound could be altered and modified in many ways by the various juxtapositions of instruments. If the trombone played a high second part to the trumpet, for instance, there would be more

²²⁰ Mulligan, oral history.

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Ibid.

intensity because he'd find it harder to play the notes. But you have to work these things out. I never know until I can hear it.²²³

It is fascinating that the tenor saxophone, one of the most prominent instruments in jazz at the time, was never considered to be included in the ensemble. This is another decision that demonstrates an obsession for attaining the right sound with the proper orchestration. It had to do with the tenor's perceived inability to lose its identity within the context of the ensemble.

We never considered having a tenor [saxophone], ever. We didn't think that a tenor had the ability to blend into the ensemble so that it would sound so disguised that you wouldn't know that it was a tenor. And that's what we wanted, you know, that the instrument totally loses its individuality and becomes part of the ensemble. That way, you can have a small ensemble, cross voicings and do things that have the impact of a larger ensemble.²²⁴

Despite the amount of thinking that went into the treatment of the six horns, Mulligan feels that the ensemble's arrangers should not have neglected the rhythm section as they did. In retrospect, he feels that obligato parts should have been written for at least the piano and perhaps the bass as well. The opportunity was missed to treat these other voices.

We didn't put as much thought into what the rhythm section was doing as we should have. As a consequence, the bass player's relationship is kind of amorphous and the piano is too. If I were writing that stuff now, I would write piano parts and not just leave everything up to what the piano player wanted to do. I think the piano player deserved more hints in what was going on in the ensemble, what was going on in the accents, the sorts of things that he might do, also sing the lines in a different voice. I didn't treat it as another voice and Gil didn't treat it at all. He dropped the piano out of "Moon Dreams." He put it in "Boplicity" and it was kind of based around John [Lewis]'s style of soloing. Great solos he plays on there!²²⁵

²²³ Nat Hentoff, "The Birth of the Cool," *Downbeat*, May 2, 1957, 16.

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Mulligan, oral history.

When the Thornhill orchestra temporarily disbanded in 1948, several of its members, including alto saxophonist Lee Konitz, bassist Joe Shulman, French horn player Sandy Siegelstein, and tuba player Bill Barber were freed to participate with Evans, Mulligan and Davis in the Nonet. Pianist/arranger John Lewis and drummer Max Roach were brought in by Davis. Mulligan was particularly enamored of Roach's participation. "He was far and away the best drummer for the time because he really could approach the [music] as a composer and he took the kind of care with playing with the ensemble that showed his compositional awareness, so I loved the way he played in ensembles. He really understood just how to kick them so it would really move."²²⁶

Davis wanted bopist Sonny Stitt on alto saxophone, but Mulligan convinced him that, given the sound they were after, the lighter sounding Konitz would be a better choice. Otherwise, they would run the risk of sounding too much like bop, and thereby lose the differentiating characteristics that they wished to attain. Davis recalls, "Gerry felt that with me, Al McKibbon (bass), Max Roach, and John Lewis all in the group and all coming from bebop, it might just be the same old thing all over again, so I took his advice and hired Lee Konitz."²²⁷ According to Davis, his decision to use a white altoist did not sit well with his fellow African-American musicians.

Then a lot of black musicians came down on my case about their not having work, and here I was hiring white guys in my band. So I just told them that if a guy could play as good as Lee Konitz played—

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ Davis, 116.

that's who they were mad about most, because there were a lot of black alto players around—I would hire him every time, and I wouldn't give a damn if he was green with red breath. I'm hiring a motherfucker to play, not for what color he is. When I told them that, a lot of them got off my case. But a few of them stayed mad with me.²²⁸

Davis's assertion that merit trumps race is consistent with Scott Deveaux's observation that the bebop pioneers seemed unmotivated by racial exclusivity.

Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker made a point of hiring white musicians for some of the earliest bop bands. Admittedly, George Wallington, Stan Levey, and Al Haig are peripheral figures, but their presence in otherwise all-black bands was a powerful statement—a deliberate breaching of the artificial barriers imposed by segregation. By admitting whites into the inner circle, Parker and Gillespie affirmed music to be a meritocracy rather than a racial privilege. If the initial creative impulse for bebop was rooted in an ethnic sensibility, musicians of both races quickly mastered the style, making it possible to assert the ultimate irrelevance of race.²²⁹

Mulligan agrees, particularly with respect to the situation in New York in the late 1940s. He does observe, however, that attitudes drastically changed in the 1960s.

You know, there was never any of the dissonance created by the racial attitudes in those years [late 1940s] that I experienced. This is not to say that they didn't exist. What was going on in the real world outside might have been different, but the thing that was going on in jazz was quite unique. Jazz was in the forefront of having blacks and whites work together in bands. The black arrangers were arranging for white bands, and the white arrangers were arranging for black bands. These were things that created a different atmosphere. . . . I was really unaware of the problems outside of jazz. And they didn't start to come into jazz until the sixties when all kinds of new political fronts were heard from and the politicization of the jazz musicians who were now well into black power, came on the scene with a chip on their shoulder saying, "Whitey stole our music." I'd say, "What do you mean, man? Whitey stole your music?" As far as I can see, music is there for anyone who can do it. If you can do it, great. If you can't, put that horn away. And I was very sorry to see it happen because the fun was

²²⁸ Ibid., 117.

²²⁹ Deveaux, 19.

to go out of the scene altogether, and what had formerly been a sense of community in the music scene, sort of ceased to exist. It became fragmented and this whole generation of black guys came along who were angry with the white guys.²³⁰

Despite Davis's relenting on Konitz, Mulligan found his leadership annoying at times, especially when Miles attempted to overrule the arrangers' strong consensus on musical issues regarding the ensemble. For example, neither J.J. Johnson nor Kai Winding was available to play trombone with the ensemble at the Royal Roost, so without consulting with Mulligan, Lewis, or Evans, Davis took matters into his own hands. Mulligan recalls,

He [Davis] encountered some kid playing trombone somewhere and he said, "Hey kid, do you want to play with the band?" Well, it turned out to be Mike Zwerin. So, he brings in this kid that nobody knew, and we really didn't like him [Zwerin] very much because he was kind of snobbish and *not* a good player. [For the radio broadcast at the Royal Roost], we started out playing "Move," a piece written by Denzil Best and arranged by John [Lewis]. This was John's best arrangement. It starts out, we're on the air, and the first solo is this kid playing the trombone. He got lost in the first eight bars and got it back together again and he played about four choruses. I said, "Wait a minute!" So, it was like Miles was punishing the band by doing this. But also, it was like he was destroying the music because Mike didn't belong there, and if he was playing with the band, he had no business playing those solos. We had players like Miles, Lee Konitz, John Lewis, and me to cover the lead solos and instead he's giving it to some kid who's never even played with a band and who gets lost on "I Got Rhythm" changes. I got pissed off at him [Davis] for that. That's why we never could gel and function as a band because you can't do things as emotional whims and expect to have a functioning social organization. You've got to really work at it.²³¹

Zwerin, after short stints later with Thornhill, Maynard Ferguson, and others, has been spending most of his later career as a jazz columnist and pop music critic for

²³⁰ Mulligan, oral history.

²³¹ Ibid.

such publications as the *Village Voice* (1964-71), *International Herald Tribune* (since 1979), and *Bloomberg News* (since 2005). His 1998 recollection of the events surrounding his 1948 participation in the Davis Nonet leaves open the possibility that perhaps he was oblivious to Mulligan's view of his capabilities. He recalls,

In those days I played my horn like a kid skiing down a slalom, with more courage than sense. Falling on my face never occurred to me. One night I climbed up to Minton's Playhouse where bebop was born, in Harlem. A lot of young cats considered Minton's too steep a slope, but I never imagined that somebody might not like me because I was white. . . . When I noticed Miles Davis standing in a dark corner, I tried harder because Miles was playing with Bird. He came over as I packed up my horn around three. I slunk into a cool slouch. I used to practice cool slouches. We were both wearing shades. No eyes to be seen. "You got eyes to make a rehearsal tomorrow?" Miles asked me. "I guess so." I acted as though I didn't give one shit for his stupid rehearsal. "Nola's. Four." Miles made it absolutely clear that he could not care less if I showed up or not. . . . Driving back over the Triborough Bridge to my parent's home, next to the tennis courts in Forest Hills, I felt like a bat-boy who had just been offered a tryout with the team. . . . Later, much later, shortly before he died, we were sitting in his penthouse suite in Concorde Lafayette Hotel in Paris and I got up the nerve to ask him: "Miles, why did you hire me?" "I liked your sound," he said, with his famous rasp. That was good enough.²³²

Davis's recollection of Zwerin's role in the band is rather more prosaic: "[On trombone], we wanted J. J. Johnson, but he was traveling with Illinois Jacquet's band, so I thought about Ted Kelly, who was playing trombone with Dizzy's band. But he was busy and couldn't make it. So we settled on a white guy, Michael Zwerin."²³³

The Nonet was an arrangers' band. The intention was for the instruments and respective players to be selected for the perceived role they could play in expressing the desired sound of the music the arrangers were writing. Davis's involvement notwithstanding, the goal was not simply to showcase his talents or the talents of any

²³² Michael Zwerin, CD booklet for *The Complete Birth of the Cool*, Capitol 1998.

²³³ Davis, 116.

individual performers. When the band performed in public at the Royal Roost in midtown Manhattan, it was Miles Davis who insisted that the arrangers be recognized and so a sign was placed outside that read, “Arrangements by Gerry Mulligan, Gil Evans, and John Lewis.” John Carisi also composed and arranged for the band, but while his work “Israel” was recorded in the later Capitol sessions, it was not performed at the Royal Roost.

The arrangements provided by Mulligan, Carisi, Lewis, and Evans for the Nonet were original in the sense that they were not simply recompositions or contrafacts of popular songs, as was the case for so many bebop tunes. For several of the arrangements, the harmonic language was inventive, incorporating novel chord progressions, unusual voicing, and clever cadential passages. The melodic phrasing was often asymmetrical with odd-shaped phrases. Some of the arrangements did not follow a strophic pattern and were instead through-composed, and several of them were extended forms with elaborate interludes. For these arrangements, the soloists needed to be more deliberate, and for their improvisations to work, astuteness with respect to the ensemble playing was required. Of this integration between soloist and ensemble, Pete Welding comments:

A corollary goal was the production of a balanced, more seamless integration between the music’s written and improvised elements than was characteristic of bop; the arrangement in effect leading and anchoring the soloist who was, in turn, expected to return his improvisation and resolve it in reference to the written segment that followed.²³⁴

Nat Hentoff notes that the revolutionary aspect of the Nonet charts was their emphasis on ensemble playing.

²³⁴ CD booklet for *The Complete Birth of the Cool*, Capitol 1998.

The soloist was still permitted to improvise, but he did so within a cohesive framework of relatively complex, freshly written ensemble material. The rhythmic and harmonic innovations of Parker, Gillespie and the rest were retained by the new men, but they aimed for a lighter and more flowing rhythmic pulse than had emerged from the guerrilla warfare that had sometimes existed in the early modern jazz rhythm sections, and a considerably more sensitive and varied dynamic range. Some of the leaping cry and splashing spontaneity of the beginnings of modern jazz were lost, but the records established a standard for coping once again with the problem—solved by the early New Orleans bands for their time, and by Ellington and Basie for theirs—of maintaining each player's individuality and at the same time emphasizing the organized expression of the group.²³⁵

Given this apparent reaction against bebop, it is not surprising that Gillespie was ambivalent about his perception of the way the Nonet's music disposed of the emotional intensity of his brand of jazz. Gillespie remarks,

It was a natural progression because Miles had definitely come out of us, and he was the leader of this new movement. So it was the same music, only cooler. They expressed less fire than we did, played less notes, less quickly, and used more space, and they emphasized tonal quality. This music, jazz, is guts. You're supposed to sweat in your balls in this music. They sorta softened it up a bit.²³⁶

The four arrangers brought various backgrounds and experience to the ensemble. Lewis (1920-2001), born in Lagrange, Illinois, starting learning classical piano at age seven. He continued his musical training at the University of New Mexico, where he also studied anthropology. He met and performed with bop drummer Kenny Clarke while he was on a three-year army tour of duty in France during World War II. After the war, he established himself as a modern jazz pianist, and in 1945 replaced Thelonious Monk in Dizzy Gillespie's big band. In the late forties, he was a regular on 52nd Street and performed with such musicians as Charlie

²³⁵ Hentoff, *Jazz Is*, 112.

²³⁶ Richard Williams, "The Conception of the Cool," in *The Miles Davis Companion*, ed. Gary Carner (London: Schirmer Books, 1996), 57.

Parker, Illinois Jacquet, Lester Young, and Ella Fitzgerald. It was a performance with Fitzgerald on January 21, 1949, that prevented him from participating in the Nonet's first recording session. In 1952, Lewis began recording as a quartet with musicians who were also alumni of the Gillespie big band: bassist Ray Brown, vibraphonist Milt Jackson, and drummer Kenny Clarke. After replacing Brown with Percy Heath, the group became the Modern Jazz Quartet. In 1955, drummer Connie Kay replaced Clarke establishing the group's long-standing membership. For more than thirty years, Lewis wrote and performed numerous acclaimed compositions for the ensemble, earning the MJQ a worldwide reputation as a unique group that could swing despite its genteel approach.

Mulligan recalls that "Lewis and I did the bulk of the writing. So, in that way we controlled the direction of the music. And that's kind of an ideal situation."²³⁷ Despite their fundamental importance to the direction of the band, Mulligan and Lewis claim they were never compensated by Davis for their arrangements.

John Lewis will point out that he [Davis] may have paid for the rehearsal studio. He didn't pay for the arrangements, which always really infuriated John [Lewis] and I suppose I would have been angry about it too, except that I let it happen. I never really gave him a bill when the stuff was recorded and sort of let it go. I think John probably did. I think John tried to explain to him, "When this was a rehearsal band that was one thing, but this is your band and you've got a recording contract and you've got this band playing in clubs and we're supposed to be paid for our arrangements." We never were.²³⁸

John Carisi (1922-92) played trumpet in Herbie Field's band from 1938 to 1943, and, for a short time during the war, was a member of Glenn Miller's Air Force

²³⁷ Mulligan, oral history.

²³⁸ Ibid.

Band. After the war, he participated in bop jam sessions at Minton's in Harlem and worked at various times with Charlie Barnet, Benny Goodman, and Claude Thornhill. He also arranged for Thornhill and Ray McKinley. His major contribution to the Nonet was his composition "Israel" which he wrote while studying with avant-garde composer Stefan Wolpe. French jazz critic André Hodeir was particularly enamored of Carisi's application of modal harmony to the blues in his score for "Israel."

On this [record] the most remarkable side is probably "Israel" which offers a rather astonishing renewal of the blues. "Israel" is an example of blues in a minor key, like Ellington's "Koko." Combining the minor scale and the scale used in the blues results in a scale like the mode of D. With true musical intelligence, John Carisi has played around with this ambiguity, extending the modal color of his composition by making fleeting references to other modes and by using defective scales.²³⁹

Since Davis was the Nonet's principal soloist and lead voice—a demanding role that would have overwhelmed lesser trumpeters—he contributed none of the fourteen arrangements that were either recorded at the Capital sessions or performed live at the Royal Roost.

The Nonet arrangements have been credited in various combinations to Mulligan, Lewis, Evans, Carisi, and Davis. British jazz writer Max Harrison cites examples where several compositions and arrangements have been misattributed.

For instance, the Davis-Evans "Boplicity" was credited both to Lewis and to Mulligan, while "S'il vous plait," which seems obviously Lewis's work, has been attributed to Davis and to Mulligan. Likewise, the arrangement of Bud Powell's "Budo" (alias "Hallucinations") was credited to Evans, although surely by Lewis. "Deception," from the last session, is the sole nonet piece signed by Davis alone as composer, but it is clearly a reworking of Shearing's "Conception" (recorded by him in 1949). . . . A disputed case is "Darn That Dream" featuring

²³⁹ André Hodeir, "Miles Davis and the Cool Tendency," in *A Miles Davis Reader*, ed. Bill Kirchner (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1997), 33.

Kenny Hagood, whose warbling remained the band's only concession to the facile appeal of popular music. This has always sounded like Evans' work to this writer and was assumed to be such in *Down Beat's* review of the original issue though long claimed by Mulligan. Again, the other vocal accompaniment, "Why Do I Love You?" is also claimed as Mulligan's but sounds even more like Evans, starting with the introduction.²⁴⁰

In a February 1995 conversation with Bill Kirchner, Mulligan confidently recognizes himself as the group's most prolific arranger with seven charts to his credit ("Jeru," "Godchild," "Budo," "Venus de Milo," "Deception," "Rocker," and "Darn That Dream"). He attributes four charts to Lewis ("Move," "Rouge," "Why Do I Love You?," and "S'il vous plaît"), two to Evans ("Boplicity" and "Moon Dreams"), and one to Carisi ("Israel").²⁴¹ The compact disc booklet that accompanies the 1998 release of Capitol's *The Complete Birth of the Cool* agrees with Mulligan except in the case of "Budo," which Capitol attributes to Lewis. This leaves Mulligan with six arrangements, still enough to keep him in the lead.

Davis, who took responsibility for getting rehearsal space for the ensemble, rented Nola Studios at Broadway and 52nd Street, and the Nonet began to rehearse there in the summer of 1948. Given the experimental and therefore unique nature of the charts, the rehearsals were anything but straightforward. Carisi recalls:

The nature of the writing we were doing was different from the kind of Basie-style language most people saw at rehearsals and even though we had good players, there were some monumental train wrecks trying to play some of these things properly. Guys would be yelling, "No, no! It goes this way!" I came to rehearsals, and most of us did, knowing what I wanted to hear and being prepared to sing all the parts and act them out. Gil was surprisingly good at that too—surprisingly because he was normally rather quiet. But he'd bust out and sing

²⁴⁰ Max Harrison, "Sheer Alchemy for a While," in *A Miles Davis Reader*, 86.

²⁴¹ Bill Kirchner, "Miles Davis and the Birth of the Cool," in *A Miles Davis Reader*, 41.

things and he did a lot of things with his hands, he was rather Italian at times.²⁴²

At this same time, Davis was performing at the Royal Roost (1580 Broadway between 47th and 48th Street), leading a sextet that included Roach, Allen Eager (tenor saxophone), Kai Winding (trombone), Tadd Dameron (piano) and Curley Russell (bass). The club, a former chicken restaurant nick-named the “Metropolitan Bopera House” had a two-tier cover charge policy and a non-drinking section where patrons could, after paying ninety cents, sit in a bleachers section and listen to live bop.²⁴³ Patrons willing to pay a steeper price could sit at a table and order food and drinks. Mulligan recalls, “You’d pay an admission and you go sit in this section of the place, and nobody bothered to buy you a drink, and you didn’t have to buy anything or you could buy a beer and nurse it all night or whatever, but sit there and listen for the price of the admission. It was great.”²⁴⁴

On Friday nights, WMCA disc jockey “Symphony Sid” Torin broadcast live from the club, giving it a “the place to be” kind of reputation for modern jazz fans. The broadcasts were incorporated into Torin’s “All Night, All Frantic Jazz Show.”

On Fridays, his program switched from records to live performance at 3:03 AM; occasionally, for instance on a New Year’s Eve broadcast, they added an hour of music, hitting at 2:03AM. Once live from the Roost’s bandstand, Sid’s show would shift back and forth to the studio, usually to allow the next band to set-up. Back in the studio, Bob Garrity would handle the news, most commercials, and other announcements. The live broadcast ended at four in the morning.²⁴⁵

²⁴² Crease, 158.

²⁴³ Davis, 110.

²⁴⁴ Mulligan, oral History.

²⁴⁵ Phil Schaap, CD booklet for *The Complete Birth of the Cool*, Capitol 1998.

Tadd Dameron's tentette was the house band at the Roost that summer and Miles Davis often performed with them there. He also performed around town with Charlie Parker's quintet which was scheduled to play at the Roost in September. Davis knew the club's manager, Monte Kay, rather well and convinced him to hire the Nonet to perform live at the Roost for two separate weeks also in September. They were to perform opposite the Count Basie band the first week; Parker's quintet was to perform the second week; and then the Nonet was to return for the third week. The dedicated members of this informal rehearsal band were now going to get the opportunity to perform on the stage of one of New York's then most prominent bebop venues. Mulligan recalls, "We worked one engagement of a few weeks at the Royal Roost. I don't recall, but somebody told me that we were working opposite the Count Basie band and that may be, but I don't remember that at all. I was so totally focused on what we were doing."²⁴⁶

The Nonet personnel who performed at the Royal Roost for the two alternating weeks of September, 1948 were: Davis (trumpet), Lee Konitz (alto saxophone), Junior Collins (French Horn), Mike Zwerin (trombone), Mulligan (baritone saxophone), Bill Barber (tuba), John Lewis (piano), Al McKibbin (bass), and Max Roach (drums). Singer Kenny Hagood provided the vocals for Mulligan's arrangement of "Darn That Dream."

An enterprising New Yorker named Boris Rose recorded portions of the radio broadcasts of September 4, including Symphony Sid's introduction plus selections from two separate sets. He also recorded portions of the September 18 broadcast.

²⁴⁶ Mulligan, oral history.

Rose, a prolific archivist of live jazz radio broadcasts, would produce, from his home, bootleg acetate discs and sell them by placing ads in *Downbeat*. His recordings of the Royal Roost Nonet broadcasts of September, 1948 were not legally released on compact disc until 1998, two years after Mulligan's death.²⁴⁷ Phil Schaap believes that Rose's recordings were made on location at the Roost rather than via the radio broadcast.

Although Mr. Rose is known to have recorded live music off the air and to have hired others to do so, I don't believe the Roost recordings to be genuine airchecks—an actual recording of the airwaves. I think they were recorded on location. The good audio quality of the music from these late 1940s AM radio broadcasts could cause such a suspicion, but I came to my conclusion because of the other components of the broadcasts. If these are truly airchecks, then why does Bob Garrity in the studio sound so dull in comparison to Symphony Sid on the bandstand, or the musicians and their performance? I believe that the initial recording was made by the technicians at The Royal Roost.²⁴⁸

In any event, the Rose recordings cover live broadcasts of three sets on two separate dates. With the exception of Mulligan, the participants agree that the personnel were the same on both dates.

. . . the suggestions of other musicians seem to come from the late Gerry Mulligan; beginning, perhaps, with the information and notes he provided for the 1971 LP release of the complete Capitol studio dates. Mulligan was certainly consistent about his suggestions as he stuck to them in numerous interviews including several with me. Particularly troubling, was Mulligan's insistence that Art Blakey is on drums on one of these recordings. Sorry Gerry, I can't believe it. For this project I reinterviewed Lee Konitz, John Lewis, and Bill Barber who are unanimous that Blakey is not on any of the music issued here. Of them, only Lewis will allow the possibility that Art Blakey might have intersected with this band in some way at some time.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁷ *The Complete Birth of the Cool*, Miles Davis, Capital CDP 7243 4 94550 2 3, 1998.

²⁴⁸ Phil Schaap, CD booklet to *The Complete Birth of the Cool*.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

Symphony Sid's recorded introduction of the band would no doubt have led the live and broadcast audience to believe that something unique was about to happen:

And right now, ladies and gentleman, back to the Royal Roost, right here at 1580 Broadway between 47th and 48th Streets, right opposite the Strand Theater, where you can sit back and relax, and dig some of the wonderful things. And right now, ladies and gentleman, we bring you something new in modern music; we bring you "Impressions in Modern Music," with the great Miles Davis and his wonderful new organization featuring Max Roach on drums, John Lewis on piano, Al McKibbin on bass, Lee Konitz on alto, Gerry Mulligan on baritone—you all remember Gerry for the "Disc Jockey Jump" that he did with Gene Krupa and the band—Bill Barber on tuba—that's right, Bill Barber on tuba—Junior Collins on French horn, and Mike Zwerin on trombone. Ladies and Gentleman, let's give them a big hand for something new in modern jazz. Ladies and gentleman, the Miles Davis organization as they do for you a John Lewis arrangement, their first tune, a thing called "Move."²⁵⁰

"Move" was composed by drummer Denzil Best, who originally called it "Geneva's Move" when the George Shearing Quintet recorded it. Mulligan's concerns about Mike Zwerin as an improviser were unfortunately justified, as Zwerin bungled the first solo of "Move." On the other hand, Davis and Konitz aptly handled their solos over the brisk harmonic rhythm with imagination, smoothness, and charm.

Given that the Nonet played opposite Count Basie at the Roost as a designated relief unit, they provided a sharp contrast to Basie's big band sound for the jazz audience. Basie's reaction to the Nonet was guardedly enthusiastic: "Those slow things sounded strange and good. I didn't always know what they were doing, but I

²⁵⁰ *The Complete Birth of the Cool*, CD.

listened and liked it.”²⁵¹ The general response, however, was lukewarm, as the bulk of the audience was there to hear Basie.

Mulligan had several concerns about the Nonet’s live performance, particularly with respect to Davis’s control of the performance. In retrospect, he comments:

Well, I kind of enjoyed doing [the Roost performances] but they were very tense occasions. You know, the band wasn’t able to really relax and enjoy itself at all in the club. It was a tremendous amount of stress involved. The engagement at the Royal Roost was, you know, it was fun to be playing that stuff in public and all that, but the band didn’t really settle down and gel because when you get down to the club situation and the thing that we were trying to do, it really needed more concentration on how to do it. If you start stretching out too many solos on those arrangements, and to me this always happens in arrangements anyway, but if the solos are too long then the composed parts lose their continuity, they lose their connection with each other and what Miles started doing in the club was to play more and more choruses on the things so the band never really solved those problems. Miles wasn’t considering it and particularly, John Lewis used to get really mad at him that he wouldn’t assume the responsibility and wouldn’t consider the band. Because this band was such a unique thing, it’s not like going in the club with a sextet.²⁵²

Despite these occasional rough spots and the fuzzy quality of the live recordings, the performances expose a well-rehearsed ensemble playing complex arrangements of modern jazz.

Unfortunately, the engagement at the Roost would be one of only a few opportunities for the Nonet to play in public, and by the end of 1948 Davis, Mulligan, Evans, and the others realized that the possibility of additional performances was slim. Some of the ensemble members returned to the Thornhill band after it started

²⁵¹ Count Basie quoted in Morgenstern , 11.

²⁵² Mulligan, oral history.

up again, while John Lewis and others went on to their own new opportunities. Eventually, the Nonet stopped rehearsing.

Fortunately, Pete Rugolo, Capitol Records' new music director and a well-known arranger himself, attended most of the performances of the two-week Roost engagement. The innovations of the ensemble were particularly appealing to him as he recalls: "I liked all the composers; they were wonderful arrangements, and he (Davis) picked all the best players."²⁵³ Rugolo had joined Capitol and moved to New York after serving as chief arranger and architect for the newer progressive version of the Stan Kenton Orchestra. As Capitol's music director responsible for putting together a stable of modern jazz artists, he frequented New York's jazz venues looking for up-and-coming artists to sign. His goal was to fill the gap in Capitol's jazz coverage that was created by the 1942-44 recording ban which came about when ASCAP, the union that most jazz musicians belonged to at the time, told its members not to record until the record companies agreed to pay them each time their music was played on the radio. His efforts resulted in the signing of such artists as Lennie Tristano, Dave Lambert, Tadd Dameron, and Buddy De Franco. Rugolo also managed to convince Capitol to sign Davis and the Nonet to record twelve sides of the music the group had performed at the Roost. Pete Welding remarks:

This in itself was something of a small miracle, for as it turns out, there was no great enthusiasm for the Nonet's music among Capitol's recording executives at the time. The firm's three chief staff producers, Lee Gillette, Voyule Gilmore and Dave Dexter, the latter an avowed jazz aficionado, not only failed to recognize its innovative character, but were wholly indifferent to it, not surprising given their predilection for big bands, swing and popular jazz-inflected vocalists such as Frank Sinatra, Peggy Lee and Nat Cole. None was interested

²⁵³ Crease, 160.

or actively involved in modern jazz developments such as bop, its offshoots or later developments—at least to the extent of recording them.²⁵⁴

The resulting recording sessions took place on January 21, 1949; April 22, 1949; and March 9, 1950. Despite the fact that the session dates spanned more than a year, and that over those dates there were several changes in the personnel, the group's sound was remarkably consistent. Even though the initial singles sold poorly, the recordings have since attained a prominent status within the historical jazz canon. While the quality, clarity, and balance of the recordings pale in comparison to what has become possible since the early 1950s, the overall sound of the session recordings is far superior to that of their live counterparts. Mulligan recalls that setting up the recording process, particularly at the first session, was not an easy process.

We'd been rehearsing for what seemed like a year. It was a labor of love with everybody concerned. We did it because we wanted to do it. Capitol sent along Pete Rugolo as the A&R man, to supervise the date. They felt that, as another composer and arranger, he'd be able to record the band well. . . . After we'd been working for an hour or so, they were still trying to get the sound together. I couldn't understand why they were having such a problem recording this thing. It was so straightforward; we got a balance between ourselves. . . . In the break, he [Rugolo] took me aside and said: "Listen, I don't know what kind of sound you guys are looking for." I said to him: "What's the difficulty? You're trying to record the guys individually; you should be recording the ensemble as a whole, and saving yourself a lot of trouble." It seemed so simple and totally logical to us. . . all instruments are there to use all the time.²⁵⁵

Most of the personnel changes for the sessions were necessary owing to the availability of the performers or lack thereof. In some instances, as in the case of the trombone chair, the change was an improvement. Mike Zwerin, who had returned to

²⁵⁴ Pete Welding, CD booklet to *The Complete Birth of the Cool*.

²⁵⁵ Raymond Horricks, *Gerry Mulligan's Ark* (London: Apollo Press Limited, 1986), 22.

his studies at the University of Miami, was replaced by two of Mulligan's favorite trombonists. Kai Winding played on the first session and J.J. Johnson finally became available on the second two dates. John Lewis, who was performing with Ella Fitzgerald on January 21, 1949, was replaced by bop pianist Al Haig on the first record date. Haig, who had performed with Parker and Gillespie at various times starting in 1944, brought a courser sensibility to the group's arrangements, particularly in Lewis' "Move" and "Budo." Lewis returned for the second two sessions. On French horn, Junior Collins was replaced by Sandy Siegelstein from Thornhill's band on the second session and by Gunther Schuller on the final date. Schuller was principal hornist with the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra from 1945 to 1959. Bassist Al McKibbin, who returned to play on the third date, was replaced by Joe Shulman on the first date and Nelson Boyd on the second date. Max Roach played on the first and third date, but was replaced by Kenny Clarke on the second date. Kenny Hagood, who provided the vocals at the Royal Roost, returned on the third session to sing on "Darn That Dream" and "Why Do I Love You?" Miles Davis, Gerry Mulligan, Lee Konitz, and Bill Barber were the only players who performed on all three session dates and at all Royal Roost performances.²⁵⁶ Even though the ensemble was not a steady working band but was assembled for each session, it executed the arrangements on the recordings, for the most part, with precision.

There is no doubt that Mulligan was energized by what they were doing. He felt that he and the others had taken bebop as a point of departure and were going down a path into uncharted territory. He recalls:

²⁵⁶ CD booklet for *The Complete Birth of the Cool*.

We had a very good idea, I thought, of what it meant in relation to what was going on around us—and whether other musicians were going to hear it and be excited by it. We were very conscious of the fact that we were doing something that hadn't been done, and it was our statement as young guys, and this coexisted in time with what was contemporary. Contemporary was what Dizzy [Gillespie] was doing. Dizzy was working with his big band and that had a pronounced effect on everybody. We used to go hear his band as much as we could, and just felt that what we were doing was like another county heard from.²⁵⁷

In 1954, several years after most of the recordings had been released as singles, Capitol, as part of its “Classics in Jazz” album series, issued eight of the ensemble’s studio performances as a ten-inch LP entitled *Birth of the Cool*. Four of the tracks (“Jeru,” “Godchild,” “Israel,” and “Venus de Milo”) had already been available as 78s, while the other four (“Rouge,” “Deception,” “Moon Dreams,” and “Rocker”) were released for the first time. Rugolo reflects on the origin of the album’s title, the recording process, and the initial reception:

I’m credited with the title, but I have to be honest, I don’t know who came up with it. I did create the album though. Those records took me over a year to finish. I spent a lot of time recording. We only did about three tunes a session because I wanted to get a good sound—I made the musicians like their solos, sometimes they weren’t too happy with them. I told them to do another take, even if they were getting tired. I made sure that we played them back and that they were happy with them. I’m glad I spent a lot of time on it. When we put those out as singles, they bombed—nobody bought them and nobody outside New York knew about these. When the LP came out musicians outside of New York finally heard them, they loved them—they were the ones who bought most of them.²⁵⁸

In 1957, with the addition of “Move,” “Budo,” and “Boplicity,” three pieces that had appeared on various anthologies, Capitol re-issued *Birth of the Cool* as a

²⁵⁷ Mulligan quoted in Crease, 162.

²⁵⁸ Crease, 162.

twelve-inch LP. "Darn That Dream" was finally added in 1971 when an LP called *The Complete Birth of the Cool* containing all twelve pieces, was released in The Netherlands. In 1998, Mark Levinson, Phil Schaap, and Michael Cuscuna produced for Capitol *The Complete Birth of the Cool* on compact disc. This release contained the twelve original sides recorded at the three 1949-50 sessions plus thirteen tracks (including Symphony Sid's introduction of the "Miles Davis Organization") recorded live at the Royal Roost. Schaap had copies of full broadcasts of live performances that he had obtained. "I went to Boris Rose and obtained dubs cut directly to disc at his shop." By 1998, Capitol had permission to release these originally bootlegged live performances.

Aside from four *Down Beat* "Jazz on Record" columns of 1950 and 1951 that analyzed Davis's solos, the press virtually ignored the recordings when they were released as singles. The 1957 release of the twelve-inch LP gained much more attention, primarily because, by then, Davis had established himself as a jazz superstar.

In May 1957, Nat Hentoff announced: "Capitol released a few weeks ago the first complete collection of those 1949-50 [Miles] Davis combo sides which were to influence deeply one important direction of modern chamber jazz."²⁵⁹ Here was an ensemble that, despite recording just twelve pieces for Capitol, and performing in public a total of two weeks, Hentoff compared to hallowed jazz elite:

These records were comparable in their impact on a new generation of jazz musicians to the Louis Armstrong Hot Five and Hot Seven records of the 1920s, some of the Duke Ellington and Basie records of

²⁵⁹ Nat Hentoff, "The Birth of the Cool," *Downbeat*, May 2, 1957: 15.

the thirties, and the records made by Parker and his associates in the early and middle forties.

Max Harrison and others regarded the Nonet's output as a major milestone in modern jazz—descendent from bop but with a new special identity more related to Duke Ellington.

For this was a new stylistic development, the first in jazz since bop, and the music was both progressive and backward-looking. Indeed, one of the most celebrated of the studio recordings, "Boplicity," jointly composed by Davis and Evans and scored by the latter, is with its twisting, turning melodic line clothed in quiet, grave colors, almost a commentary on 1940s bop from the viewpoint of the cool 1950s jazz to come. Rhythmically conservative, the nonet's music lacked the aggressive thrust of bop while offering a more oblique tension, the pleasures of understatement and of an altogether different kind of sophistication. Bop produced excellent themes, yet they occupied little time in most performances in that style, whereas this fresh initiative, while finding plenty of room for solos, always made them parts of a greater whole. This sort of integration, familiar in Morton and Ellington, was new to postwar jazz. This was, almost uniquely a jazz movement started by composers (and one recomposer).²⁶⁰

Davis acknowledges Ellington's heavy influence on the music of the Nonet.

Bebop didn't have the humanity of Duke Ellington. It didn't even have that recognizable thing. Bird and Diz were great, fantastic, challenging—but they weren't sweet. But *Birth of the Cool* was different because you could hear everything and hum it also. *Birth of the Cool* came from black musical roots. It came from Duke Ellington. We were trying to sound like Claude Thornhill, but he had gotten his shit from Duke Ellington and Fletcher Henderson.²⁶¹

With each subsequent release of *Birth of the Cool* albums, the "classic" stature of the Nonet continued to rise with most of the credit going to Davis and Evans, leaving Gerry Mulligan somewhat shortchanged from an appreciation standpoint. Mulligan's contribution has been minimized by the jazz press even though his role

²⁶⁰ Harrison, 85.

²⁶¹ Davis, 119.

was central. He was the only participant to continue working with the Nonet's music with, for example, his recordings of "Rocker" and "Godchild" by his early fifties tentette, and his recording of "Israel" by his sixties Concert Jazz Band. In 1992, Mulligan assembled an ensemble, reconstructed and recorded the twelve Capitol arrangements, and released the *Re-Birth of the Cool*. Despite his being shortchanged, Mulligan and other of the Nonet's members, such as John Lewis, Al Haig, Max Roach, and Lee Konitz, eventually became jazz musicians of major standing.

Reaction to the *Birth of the Cool* recordings was not always positive. Stanley Crouch wrote:

This style had little to do with the blues and almost nothing to do with swing. That Davis, one of the most original improvisers, a man with great feeling for blues, a swinger almost of the first magnitude, should have put "cool" in motion is telling. Indeed, it is his first, promontory example of his dual position in jazz. Heard now, the nonet recordings seem little more than primers for television writing. What the recordings show us, though, is that Davis, like many other jazzmen, was not above the academic temptation of Western music. Davis turns out to have been overly impressed by the lessons he received at Juilliard, when he arrived in New York in 1944. The pursuit of a soft sound, the uses of polyphony that were far from idiomatic, the nearly coy understatement, the lines that had little internal propulsion: all amount to another failed attempt to marry jazz to European devices.²⁶²

Davis biographer Bill Cole suggests that the recordings negatively influenced subsequent generations of "cool" jazz players:

For this literate music, the band was built on musicians who were strong readers. It did launch a line of other bands whose intent was to play complicated written lines rather than spontaneous improvisations, but what Miles himself was trying to do in this band was to perform amidst a sound. The consequence of all this was a long line of imitators who were not really interested in improvisational music, but rather needed a mechanism to exploit African American music. The

²⁶² Stanley Crouch, "Play the Right Thing", *New Republic*, February 12, 1990: 31.

so-called “cool” period cropped up to give jazz its unemotional literate guise.²⁶³

Mulligan, especially after he establishes himself in Los Angeles in the early fifties, would be closely associated with the “cool” movement in jazz.

Mulligan’s writing for the Nonet demonstrates the young arranger’s rapidly developing creative capability, which results in novel approaches that would continue to develop over the next decade. Despite his innovations with respect to style, orchestration, harmony, and counterpoint, he still manages to remain respectful to the then forty-year-old jazz tradition. His Nonet pieces presage the appealing simplicity that his writing would achieve in the fifties. This is particularly evident in “Venus de Milo” which begins with a spare open theme that is followed by Davis’s restrained, vibratoless solo (Figure 7), a trumpet sound that foreshadows that of Mulligan’s future pianoless quartet costar, Chet Baker. Shipton notes that Mulligan’s baritone saxophone solo that follows “creates an aural association between Davis’s clean trumpet sound and the large horn.”²⁶⁴

With his arrangement of George Wallington’s “Godchild,” Mulligan employs the full range of registers he has at his disposal to present the tune’s opening ascending theme. He moves the theme upward through the five-octave range of available instruments, starting with the tuba and baritone sax (Figure 8) and culminating with the trumpet on top of all six horns (Figure 9).

²⁶³ Bill Cole, *Miles Davis: A Musical Biography* (New York: William Morrow, 1974), 50-1.

²⁶⁴ Shipton, 651.

Alto

Bari.

Tpt.

Hn.

Tbn.

Tuba

Pno.

Gm7b5 C7#5 Fm7 Bb7b5 Am7b5 D7b5 Gm7 C7b9 Fm7 Gm7

Figure 7: Miles Davis's solo entrance at m.7 of "Venus de Milo"

Bartone Sax and Tuba

Add French Horn

Figure 8: "Godchild" (mm. 1-5)

Alto

Bari.

Tpt.

Hn.

Tbn.

Tuba

Figure 9: "Godchild" (mm. 6-9)

The result is a sound which mimics that of a much larger ensemble. In “Godchild,” Mulligan also alters the traditional structure of the standard thirty-two bar (AABA) song form by making each of the two initial statements of “A” eight and one-half rather than eight measures long. He does this by inserting a 2/4 measure before the last bar of each of the two iterations. The bridge and recapitulation “A” are the standard eight measures in length.

With “Rocker,” a piece he originally wrote for Elliot Lawrence and then later arranged for Charlie Parker’s string outfit, Mulligan enhances the tune’s simple three-note motive with a developing technique of his that involves the ensemble’s inner voices. One can hear an independence in the inner voices that was previously uncommon in jazz arranging, a practice that Mulligan points out he heard used by Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn.²⁶⁵ This chart particularly highlights the wind players’ distinctive voices, not only in the solos but in the ensemble sections as well. Mulligan structures “Rocker” so that these ensemble sections are emphasized as much as, if not more than, solos. He creates a delicate, airy sound when the six horns play together, a sound that is made possible thanks to the addition of the orchestral instruments, French horn and tuba. Klinkowitz describes the impression created by Mulligan’s joining of Davis’s and Konitz’s solos in “Rocker” as “not of raunchy beboppers blowing to the beat of the band but rather of angels gliding on tiptoes past a celestial throne.”²⁶⁶ The alto saxophone, French horn, trombone, baritone saxophone, and tuba play a cleverly orchestrated accompaniment under the solos. The

²⁶⁵ Kirchner, 41.

²⁶⁶ Klinkowitz, 42.

chords that these supporting instruments play are scored in such a way that they resemble “comping” piano fills both in terms of the voicing and the punctuating rhythmic configuration (Figure 10). Mulligan tightly packs these chords and scores them in the instruments’ high registers, a technique he no doubt picked up from working with Claude Thornhill. The tune’s final solo is by Mulligan himself on baritone saxophone. His solo materializes seamlessly out of the ensemble and provides an effective bridge to the final statement of the theme.

The image shows a musical score for the piece "Rocker" at measure 45. The score is arranged in a grand staff with seven staves: Alto, Bari., Tpt., Hn., Tbn., Tuba, and Pno. The key signature is two flats (B-flat major/D minor). The time signature is 4/4. A box labeled "45" is placed above the first staff. The score is divided into two measures by a double bar line. The first measure contains dynamics *sfz* and *f*. The second measure contains dynamics *f* and *f*. Chord markings are placed below the Pno. staff: Dm7, D7m7, Cm7, F7#5(#9), Bb, Bb7, Cm7, C#7, Dm7, Bb7. The Tpt. staff has a solo line starting in the second measure. The other wind parts (Bari., Hn., Tbn., Tuba) play rhythmic accompaniment.

Figure 10: “Comping” winds under trumpet solo at m. 45 of “Rocker”

Mulligan’s reworking of “Jeru” for the Nonet prompted Hodeir in 1956 to remark, “If my recollection is accurate, it is the first time in the history of jazz the permanence of the 4/4 bar becomes doubtful. Will this revolutionary attempt bear fruit?”²⁶⁷ He points to “Jeru” as being the most revolutionary. There are four choruses with the initial two As of the first presented in the standard double eight-bar

²⁶⁷ Hodeir, 35.

phrase. The bridge has twelve bars with measures two, four, five, six, and seven in 3/4, and measure eight in 6/4; the final “A” is nine bars long. Only the second chorus, where Davis improvises, is structured in the standard form. Hodier notes:

The most interesting innovation is undeniably the 3/4 bars in the first and last choruses. They do not, in reality, seem so much a change of measure as a suspension of meter. The question that inevitably arises is, Does the music continue to swing? A decisive answer is hard to give. Certainly, listening to this passage creates an incontestable annoyance, a feeling of floating around; but neither effect is enough to destroy the impression established by the preceding phrases. There is a kind of momentum that could be modified only by brake pressure, and what the listener feels is that there is not more control but less. . . . “Jeru” and “Godchild” show a determination to get away from the four-bar unit that may soon spread from arrangers to improvisers.²⁶⁸

Klinkowitz comments on the significance of Mulligan’s sound-oriented approach:

The emphasis on weird tonality and the loveliness of unencumbered sound is itself part of a larger alternative tradition in writing dating back to Ellington and continuing with Gil Evans and the younger writers Mulligan would himself employ for the Concert Jazz Band [1960]. Mulligan was able to write so comfortably within this tradition that one of his arrangements, of “Darn That Dream” for the group’s vocalist, Kenny Hagood, was for years ascribed to Evans, so completely did the younger arranger adopt the Thornhill veteran’s style of almost atonal but unobtrusive sound.²⁶⁹

Mulligan’s charts for the Nonet are inimitably matched to the ensemble’s instrumentation—six horns and a three-piece rhythm section. When, later in Mulligan’s career, they are performed by either larger or smaller ensembles, they sound less inventive, less sharp, and less modern. These charts represent a fortuitous intersection of opportunity and insight along the path of Mulligan’s still young career.

²⁶⁸ Ibid., 35-6.

²⁶⁹ Klinkowitz, 44.

More than forty years later, Mulligan would resurrect the music of the Nonet, and, with mostly new personnel, re-record it. The idea came about when he decided to recreate several of the arrangements for Gil Evans' memorial service. At the Montreux Jazz Festival in the summer of 1991, Mulligan told Davis that he was thinking of playing and recording the music of the Nonet again, and Davis replied that maybe he would want to collaborate on the endeavor. Mulligan then approached Dave Grusin and Larry Rosen, the founders of GRP records, to float the idea of some sort of remake/reunion of the original Davis Nonet effort.

Then they [Grusin and Rosen] thought about it for awhile, and I guess they talked it over with their people, and they said what they would really be interested in is to have all the pieces that were recorded originally with *The Birth of the Cool* and would I be interested. Would I redo those? I said, "We'll redo those and call it *The Re-Birth of the Cool*," and that's what we wound up doing. I didn't mind doing it. . . . I also was glad of having the chance of having an album on an important label because that was going to help the band on a summer tour, so we went ahead and did it that way. We did exactly the tunes that were done originally.²⁷⁰

Mulligan had wanted to work with GRP since the label signed a distribution deal with MCA Records in 1987 allowing GRP's jazz albums, including Mulligan's, to be marketed throughout Europe by a coalition of independent distributors coordinated through MCA's Zurich office.

Mulligan's greatest challenge in this effort was to re-construct the music.

Apparently, no one who was involved in the original effort could locate the charts.

Mulligan recalls his frustration and the resulting tremendous effort:

I had some of the Tentette music but I had none of *The Birth of the Cool* music. Miles was supposed to have had it, but it turned out he didn't! [Fortunately], some of the pieces had been transcribed already. I had worked on a couple of them when Lee [Konitz] asked me to. He

²⁷⁰Mulligan, oral history.

said he had tried to get the things transcribed, and he didn't have any luck getting it to sound right. So he asked if I would do it, and I said, "I'll do it, but you have to sit there with me while I do it, man. I'm not going to sit there by myself." So, he came up here and I spent a couple of days redoing these things and he sat and slept a lot, but I said, "If I'm going to go through this then you're going to go through it too." So, I did a couple of the things which ultimately Gunther Schuller published through his publishing company. . . . There were also a couple of charts that Gunther saved from the date that he was on, which was very lucky—the two charts that Gil Evans had written. Gunther said that if he had any idea that Miles was going to lose that music and be so careless with it, he would have taken all of the music and stashed it away somewhere. I wish he had done that, but you know I take some of the blame too, because I should have known that Miles would be careless with the music. John Lewis and I should have taken care of our own things, because that's the way it was.²⁷¹

One can only imagine the difficulty Mulligan experienced in reverse-engineering the charts from recordings that were more than forty years old. He remembers:

It was incredibly difficult trying to hear the inner voices and the lower voices when there's no definition at all. I wrote a lot of those things, so if *anybody* should be able to hear them, *I* should be able to hear them and I can't hear any definition in the thing. It has the sound of the chords, but there's no real telling who's playing what. Oddly enough, when I started to get into those things and try to reconstruct some of them, I remembered why I did what I had done and made the choices that I did, and a lot of times you have to make arbitrary choices about who plays what line and what you may choose to leave out of an ensemble—if you've got too many notes you want to play and not enough horns. So, you've got to make choices about what makes the strongest chord structures and I couldn't hear anything on those things at all. They just had no definition!²⁷²

Unfortunately, Miles Davis never participated. "By the time I got the date set up, it was just about that time I went to get in touch with him, and he'd started having strokes,

²⁷¹ Ibid.

²⁷² Ibid.

and that was the end of it. He died not long after that [September 28, 1991].”²⁷³

Mulligan chose Wallace Roney on trumpet as the logical replacement for Davis on the *Re-Birth of the Cool* sessions. Like Davis, Roney as a child studied classical music, taking lessons from Sigmund Hering of the Philadelphia Orchestra, and he was often featured with the Philadelphia Brass Ensemble as a youth. He took jazz lessons from both Clark Terry and Dizzy Gillespie until becoming one of the only students Miles Davis ever mentored. Roney won the *Downbeat* award for Best Young Jazz Musician of the Year in 1979 and 1980. He also won the magazine’s Critics’ Poll for Best Trumpeter to Watch in 1989 and 1990. Roney and Davis performed as a duet to critical acclaim at the July 1991 Montreux Festival. Mulligan appreciated Roney’s talent: “He really understands something about Miles’ melodic sense. He did some astounding melodic things on this album.”²⁷⁴ Mulligan, John Lewis, and Bill Barber were the only three of the original Davis Nonet members to participate in the 1992 album. Lee Konitz was originally scheduled to join the recording session, but prior commitments prevented his participation. Mulligan remembers, “When Lee asked me who was going to take his place on alto, and I told him Phil Woods would like to do it. Lee laughed and said, ‘I think you just invented the Birth of the Hot!’”²⁷⁵ The other Nonet personnel included Dave Bergeron (trombone), John Clarke (French horn), Dean Johnson (bass), Ron Vincent (drums), and Mel Tormé who participated as vocalist on “Darn that Dream.”

Of the 1992 album, Giddins writes,

²⁷³ Ibid.

²⁷⁴ Liner notes to *Re-Birth of the Cool* GRP 9679 CD, 1992.

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

It captures the sensuousness of the music while avoiding slavishness, underscoring the indigenous qualities with an unforced contemporaneity. The notes are the same but the articulation is refurbished. . . . In concert, Mulligan amplified the ensemble by adding a second trumpet and tenor saxophone, making the polyphonic weave even more elaborate, especially on Evans' sumptuous "Moon Dreams": a perfect unison statement for eight bars, followed by counterpoint in the second eight as the theme is shaded and interpreted by the full complement, and a marvelous poetic finish with arco bass subtly bonding brasses and reeds.²⁷⁶

In the August 1992 issue of *Downbeat*, Kevin Whitehead compares *Re-Birth of the Cool* somewhat unfavorably with the original:

On Mulligan's *Re-Birth*, the old charts still sound fresh. Faithfully transcribed, they're crisply played—maybe too crisply. On the head of *Birth*'s "Move," arranger John Lewis' lovely background figures were soft-edged, intensifying the gauzy Thornhill effect. On *Re-Birth* they're Kenton-tight, the original warmth unsuccessfully reconstituted using studio echo. Also on "Move," the trumpet solo has wisely been shifted from first to third position, so you're not tempted to compare Roney's improvisation with Miles' compact gem. . . . Phil Woods is on alto, not originator Lee Konitz. . . . If Mulligan wanted to comment on the cool legacy now, then Konitz—a continuously inventive improviser who's led his own nonet—is irreplaceable. The Birdier Woods give the music a sharper, more conventional edge. Mulligan rewrites cool even as he celebrates it. . . . Torme's occasional polysyllabic excesses ("Dar-na-na-nar-nar-narn that dream") wreck Kenny Hagood's old feature. . . . If you cue up *Re-Birth* a quarter as often as you do *Birth*, your priorities are screwy.²⁷⁷

As will be presented in more detail in the next chapter, Mulligan's output from his other projects in 1949 and 1950 timeframe was much more conventional. His recordings with trombonist Kai Winding, tenor saxophonist Brew Moore, and pianist George Wallington are straightforward, arranged bop charts with standard "blowing" (improvised solos). Missing are the intricate ensemble passages of the

²⁷⁶ Giddins, 363-64.

²⁷⁷ Kevin Whitehead, "Record and CD Reviews: 'Re-Birth of the Cool,'" *Downbeat*, Aug 1992, 42.

Miles Davis Nonet. Mulligan would briefly return to his Nonet approach to arranging with his short-lived tentette which recorded for Prestige in the fall of 1951. With this group, he uses two trumpets, one trombone, one tenor saxophone, two baritone saxophones, piano, bass, drums, and maracas (played by his then girlfriend, Gail Madden). The second baritone is used primarily in the ensemble, while Mulligan fronts the group and provides many of the solos. Tenor saxophonist Allen Eager employs a rather light-toned approach, evoking Konitz's alto style. Ollie Wilson, who plays valve trombone, alludes to the French horn sound of the Davis Nonet. Mulligan's arranging for this group, particularly in the contrapuntal sections of "Funhouse," reflect several of his Nonet approaches.

Despite these other activities, it was the Miles Davis Nonet that drew the bulk of Mulligan's emotional focus. The eventual and inevitable breakup left Mulligan feeling disillusioned and despondent.

I thought it was the end of everything. I felt washed up. I was playing gigs with Kai [Winding] and George [Wallington], and then I played with Georgie Auld's band—and he was never as mean to me as others have since said he was to them—but I didn't feel I was going anywhere. . . also, I had the drug problem.²⁷⁸

²⁷⁸ Raymond Horricks, "Gerry Mulligan's Own Special Sense of Good Movement," *Crescendo and Jazz Music*, Dec 1997 - Jan 1998, 6.

Other 1940s New York Bands

But I was a very depressive kind of a person at that point. It was hard to picture me as the same person, as the happy kid in Ohio. And you know, it was hundreds of hours and thousands of dollars into analysis to try to figure out what happened to me, what did I get so upset and angry and depressed about? But, depressed I was, and angry I was.²⁷⁹

It was Mulligan's writing rather than his playing that caught the attention of Miles Davis and other small group leaders in late forties New York. While his baritone saxophone playing was developing into the distinctive style that would later be acclaimed, his solos of the 1948-1952 period were characterized by tentative phrasing, a vague tone and a less than exceptionally strong command of the horn. So, while Nonet alumni like Lee Konitz, Kai Winding, and J.J. Johnson succeeded on the strengths of their playing skills, Mulligan still depended on his composing and arranging capabilities, now for smaller ensembles, to gain recognition and income.

With respect to the characteristics of his writing, Klinkowitz observes that "Mulligan's charts for these new smaller groups proved how he could turn the tables [on the older styles], which is obviously what their leader's wanted: open flowing lines for hard blowing, but with a coherent sense of swing that the more progressive Krupa and Lawrence scores had achieved when at their best."²⁸⁰ With these smaller ensembles, Mulligan could write in a freer format for the unique timbre of the individual instruments rather than for entire sections as was the case for Lawrence, Krupa, and Thornhill. Working with smaller groups would also give him the opportunity to incorporate the idiosyncratic sound of his baritone saxophone, thus allowing his playing to emerge as a distinctive voice.

²⁷⁹ Mulligan, oral history.

²⁸⁰ Klinkowitz, 38.

During this period, Mulligan sank deeper into his heroin habit, and he became progressively more bitter, depressed, and unruly. His bohemian lifestyle gave him a rather disheveled appearance as he sported a ragged goatee and what his friends referred to as a “Prince Valiant haircut.”²⁸¹

British bassist Peter Ind, who took up residence in New York during this time, told Horricks that Mulligan was “always around, always aware, absorbing and attempting everything on his horn. He was good in the company of other musicians, but I realized that there was an edge to him at this time, an inner tension.”²⁸² His belligerent and defensive personality would often result in undesirable consequences. “You know I lost so many opportunities, just because of not being able to cope with the change, the constant change in climate of emotional relationships with people. And it brought me to certain things that I wish I had not done.”²⁸³ For instance, he recalls his short-lived association with Benny Goodman in 1948.

At the time we were doing the club dates with the Miles Davis Nonet, the *Birth of the Cool Band*, Benny Goodman called up Gil Evans one day and asked if he could go down to the Royal Roost to hear the band. So Gil brought Benny down one night. And Benny sat there and was listening to the band and he would say to Gil, “Who wrote that chart?” and he (Gil) would say, “Well, that’s Gerry’s.” *All* of the stuff that he liked was from *my* charts, so he told Gil he’d like me to write for his new band. He was going to start a new band, a “bebop” band. People were after him to get a new band together, so why not get a modern sounding band? And so, somebody from Benny’s office contacted me and invited me to write with them and I talked to Benny. My problem was that I wanted to play [as well as write]. At that point I had started to really feel like playing and I told Benny, “I’d like to write for you. I’d like to play with the band.”²⁸⁴

²⁸¹ Nat Hentoff, “Profiles (Part 1),” 93.

²⁸² Horricks, *Gerry Mulligan's Ark*, 25.

²⁸³ Mulligan, oral history.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

Mulligan later reflected that he probably should have taken Evans' advice and not even considered playing for Goodman, given the bandleader's reputation for being a hard manager to his sidemen. For two weeks, Mulligan participated in rehearsals, but his increasingly more depressive state became overt and consequently noticed by Goodman.

And Benny wasn't having it. I don't blame him. Because he finally took me aside one day and said, "You look unhappy. What are you unhappy about?" I said, "You really want me to tell you?" He said, "Yes." I said, "I can't understand how you can play the written music and interpret it the way you do and how you can stand the band playing this stuff so sloppy." Well my problem was kind of particular because a lot of the old Fletcher Henderson charts [that Goodman's band played] were written for five brass and four saxes, so then somebody had added a baritone part and third trombone part and they doubled, and this poor little cat playing third trombone was terrible, and it just drove me nuts.²⁸⁵

Mulligan later reflected on his diatribe to Goodman. "I guess he [Goodman] lacked confidence at that that moment, which was why he was trying to start a modern band in the first place. And then to have this kid [me] calling him on something that he felt had been his particular skill—shaping a band—was too much."²⁸⁶ The next day Goodman fired Mulligan. Of the four arrangements Mulligan had written for the bandleader, Goodman kept one. "He [Goodman] had Buddy Greco on the piano. Because Buddy was going to sing with the band, they were going to have a vocal group. And so I had written an arrangement for Buddy and his vocal group. It was the only thing he had for them, so he bought that

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ Nat Hentoff, "Profiles, 'In the Mainstream (Part 1),'" 93.

arrangement and the rest of them he gave back to me.”²⁸⁷ Apparently there was a delay in Goodman’s payment for the arrangement and consequently, Mulligan barged into an afternoon audition the bandleader was conducting at the Music Corporation of America studio and shouted, “Dig this cat with two million dollars and he doesn’t want to pay me for one lousy arrangement!”²⁸⁸

Mulligan wrote and/or played for numerous small groups in New York between 1947 and 1952 (the year he left for California). On January 29, 1947, a group led by Red Rodney recorded for Keynote (HL197-1) an arrangement of Mulligan’s “Elevation,” the tune he originally composed and arranged for Elliot Lawrence’s big band. This particular arrangement was scored for trumpet (Rodney), tenor saxophone (Allen Eager), baritone saxophone (Serge Chaloff), piano (Al Haig), bass (Chubby Jackson), and drums (Tiny Kahn). Mulligan would recycle this song again as one of his signature numbers for his mid-1950s sextet. In the summer of 1948, just before the Davis Nonet’s September performances at the Royal Roost, he played baritone saxophone at a recording session for the song “Hot Halavah” (Castle 508 78 1948) with Eager, Haig, Jimmy Raney (guitar), Clyde Lombardi (bass), Charlie Perry (drums), and three vocalists: Blossom Dearie, Buddy Stewart, and Dave Lambert. This group was named the Five Bops.

Mulligan would begin his stormy association with tenor saxophonist Stan Getz in 1949. His arrangements of songs he wrote, “Five Brothers” and “Four and One Moore” were recorded by Getz, four other tenor saxophonists (Al Cohn, Allen Eager, Zoot Sims, and Brew Moore), and a rhythm section (Walter Bishop, Gene

²⁸⁷ Mulligan, oral history.

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

Ramey, and Charlie Perry) at a session on April 8, 1949 (Prestige 008-2). These charts were a reaction to the Jimmy Giuffre composition, “Four Brothers,” which was made a hit by the Woody Herman orchestra in 1947. Herman’s “Four Brothers” features three tenor saxophonists (Stan Getz, Zoot Sims, Herbie Stewart) and Serge Chaloff on baritone saxophone. With Mulligan’s “Five Brothers” and “Four and One Moore,” the challenge was to show what could be accomplished in a smaller ensemble configuration—a chamber ensemble (octet) rather than Herman’s concerto grosso. Klinkowitz observes that Mulligan succeeds “by giving the tenors more range than in Jimmy Giuffre’s orchestration and by distributing the melody’s counterpoised lines to these two slightly different voicings.”²⁸⁹ Mulligan recalls his difficulties with Getz surrounding the writing of these two charts—difficulties exacerbated by Mulligan’s drug addiction.

So there were things that I was able to do to support myself, but not well, because it’s expensive to have a habit. It’s also time-consuming and requires focus. . . . During that period, the two guys that I most often roomed with were Zoot Sims and Brew Moore, two of the Pres [Lester Young]-influenced tenor players. When I was rooming with Brew at the time he was pretty well strung out (and I was getting there also), he got a record date. He had this idea of getting all of the tenor players together, all the white guys who liked Pres. There was Brew, Zoot, Stan Getz, Al Cohn, and Allen Eager. He sold this idea to Prestige, and he asked me to write for it, so I started to write some things. . . . Well, before long, they made Stan the leader instead of Brew because Stan was better known. So Stan now takes over the leadership and I’m now writing these arrangements for *Stan*. And Stan used to come by every day to the rooms where Brew and I were living and say, “How are you doing? Is it going all right? Are the arrangements ready yet?” and so on. I said, “Yes Stan, of course.” Brew and I would laugh. And so I wrote these things. And Stan said, “Also, I want you to play piano on these things, because I know you play piano in sessions a lot. You play piano on the date and do these arrangements, and that’d be great.” . . . On the day of the session, I had come from another rehearsal, and I had my horn with me, so I

²⁸⁹ Klinkowitz, 39.

came into the studio and see that Walter Bishop is playing the piano. I turned to Brew and said, “Well, I see I’m not the piano player on this date.” Uh-oh. And at some point during the date, Stan asked me if he could use my baritone for one of the pieces so he could play the fifth part rather than doing it on tenor, because it was kind of low. So I said, “Sure, Stan”. So he used my baritone and I wrote two things for him, “The Five Brothers” and “Four and One Moore.”. . . When it was all over, that was the end of Stan’s soliciting into my well being and my progress in writing. And I started to try to get paid and heard nothing, and when I saw Stan, I said, “Listen, Stan, I really need the money.” And he turns around and says to me, “I’ll see you at the Union.” How do you deal with people like that? So, ultimately, I did indeed [go to the Union]. Well, on the day of the hearing I went down to the Union all ready to tell my sad story and they said, “You can’t bring these charges,” and I said, “Well, why not?” And they said, “Because you’re not *in* the Union. You’ve been erased for non-payment of dues.” I said, “Non-payment of dues! If these people would pay me the money they owe me, I’d pay my damn dues!” And that was that. They wouldn’t hear my case, and I didn’t collect the money. Stan never did pay.²⁹⁰

Mulligan’s difficulties with Getz would continue through the duration of their respective careers. Five years later, Getz would tell *Downbeat* about a sextet that he planned to assemble by inserting himself and trombonist Bob Brookmeyer into Mulligan’s pianoless quartet. “I’m going out to the coast and when I return at the end of February, I intend to bring with me Gerry Mulligan and Chet Baker. . . . With guys who can blow as much as Gerry, Chet, and Bob, the band should be the end. All three of them will write for the band.”²⁹¹ Getz neglected to consult Mulligan before the article was published, and as a result, Mulligan vehemently denied the collaboration in a statement that was printed in the next issue.

I don’t know what Stan has in mind here when he talks about adding me and Chet to his combo, joining me, or whatever it is. . . . For years I stayed in the background and wrote arrangements for many bands.

²⁹⁰ Mulligan, oral history.

²⁹¹ “Stan Getz Excited Over Idea of Joining Gerry Mulligan 4,” *Downbeat*, 25 Feb 1953, cited in Donald L. Maggin, *Stan Getz, A Life in Jazz* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1996), 122.

Now, in the quartet, I have something that is all mine. I can see no reason for sharing it with anyone.²⁹²

Getz attempted to downplay the disagreement in a statement that was published in the next issue.

The important part of the idea was the musical structure that could be built and the fact that I have access to bookings and a major record label that would be to Gerry's advantage, and he has originality in music that it would groove me to work with. That's all! That's it! So, take me off your list of leaders with evil design on young talent.²⁹³

Mulligan and Getz would eventually work together, when in 1958, Norman Granz facilitated several sessions that resulted in the release of *Gerry Mulligan Meets Stan Getz* (Verve V6-8535). For half of the six songs, the two saxophonists trade horns, with Mulligan on tenor and Getz on baritone. Mulligan regrets this "gimmick" mainly because of his discomfort with Getz's horn.

You know I would have done it with Zoot [Sims]'s horn. I would have done it with Al [Cohn]'s horn or Brew [Moore]'s horn, because I could play their mouthpieces well and sound good on them. I could not play Stan's mouthpiece. His reed was too soft and I just really sounded awful to myself on it. He controlled it and sounded fine but it sounded awful to me.²⁹⁴

In the spring and summer of 1949, Mulligan participated, both as a writer and as a player, in four recording sessions with Kai Winding, Brew Moore, and George Wallington. For three of the sessions, the ensemble was a septet featuring a front line of four horn players: trombone (Winding), tenor sax (Moore), baritone sax (Mulligan), and trumpet (Jerry Lloyd). The fourth session involved a sextet without

²⁹² "Combine with Getz? Not for Me: Mulligan" *Downbeat*, 11 Mar 1953, cited in Maggin, 122.

²⁹³ "Chords and Discords: Mulligan Stew: Getz Boiled Down by Stan," *Downbeat*, 8 Apr 1953, cited in Maggin, 122-3.

²⁹⁴ Mulligan, oral history.

the trumpet. The session rhythm sections included Wallington on piano, Curly Russell on bass, and either Max Roach, Roy Haynes, or Charlie Perry on drums. While Mulligan's writing for the Davis Nonet was comparatively abstract, expanding the boundaries of modern jazz, his work with Moore, Winding, and Wallington is less intellectual and focuses more on providing an effective structure for creative improvisation. The ensemble sections feature tightly packed horns, counterpoint, fluidity, and Mulligan's now signature technique of often voicing the baritone and trombone in their highest registers. Shipton describes Mulligan's work of 1949-50 as "straightforward if highly arranged bop charts, with ordinary 'blowing' solos, rather than an outgrowth of the low-key instrumental approach and intricate ensemble voicings of the Miles Davis/Gil Evans group. There were more explicit links with the latter, however, in Mulligan's tentette, which recorded for Prestige in the fall of 1951."²⁹⁵ Mulligan's smaller group writing of the late forties presages the sound, style, and approach of his own ensembles of the mid-fifties that feature trumpet, tenor sax, valve trombone, and baritone sax.

The first of the septet albums, released on May 20, 1949, was entitled *Brothers and Other Mothers, Vol. 2* (Savoy 2236) and featured the Brew Moore Septet. It included four sides: "Mud Bug," "Gold Rush," "Lestorian Mode," and "Kai's Kid." Mulligan wrote the arrangements for all four charts including his original, "Gold Rush." This album was reissued on a special Savoy anthology that traced the influence of Lester Young on tenor sax playing. *Brothers and Other Mothers* was included in the anthology because Brew Moore had always been considered a Young disciple. Ira Gitler writes:

²⁹⁵ Shipton, 704.

What we don't have to wonder about is the influence of Lester Young (and the Count Basie band) on his contemporaries and particularly on the youngsters coming up behind him. Charlie Parker (b. 1920) was strongly directed by Pres as witness the Wichita radio station tracks with Jay McShann and Sonny Rollins (b. 1929) who was touched by both pre-war and post-war Lester. . . . However, it was the players born between these two titans who were most heavily moved by the Presidential vapors. I refer you to Mark Gardner's notes [from Vol. 1] for a listing. Three of the principals from that album are represented here as well: Allen Eager, Brew Moore and Al Cohn, and the work of a fourth Pres disciple, Phil Urso, is brought to light. . . . Brew Moore looked like a tough old sailor or an ex-boxer. In truth, he was a wise, witty man. His letters are full of bon mots. While his playing was always earthy, beautifully basic, basically beautiful and not what you would call intellectual, the man's brightness always came through. His work improves with age.²⁹⁶

Milton Aubrey (Brew) Moore (1924-1973) was born in Indianola, Mississippi, where his formal musical training began on trombone at age twelve. He eventually switched to clarinet, then to tenor saxophone. Always inspired by Lester Young, he got his first playing engagement with a Texas territorial band as a high school student. After spending a year at the University of Mississippi, Moore left his home state to pursue a professional career, and between 1942 and 1947, worked on various performing stints in New Orleans, Memphis, and New York where he was first exposed to bebop. Moore, who idolized Young, and even held his horn at the same unorthodox angle, initially rejected bebop, but later adapted it into his style. "When I heard what Bird had done for himself, I realized that Pres was not the complete messiah. So I combined Bird and Pres and my own thing."²⁹⁷

²⁹⁶ Ira Gitler, Liner notes to *Brothers and Other Mothers*, Vol. 2, Savoy 2236, 1949.

²⁹⁷ John S. Wilson, "Brew Moore, Saxophonist, Back After Two Decades," *New York Times*, September 11, 1968: 41.

Mulligan later used his arrangement of Jerry Lloyd's "Mud Bug" (a Mississippi expression for crayfish) to introduce his 1955-56 sextet, which included the same instrumentation minus the piano. The arrangement of this twelve-bar blues form demonstrates Mulligan's change in emphasis from the cool sound of the Davis Nonet back to the straight-ahead bop sound reminiscent of his big band charts. His baritone saxophone solo also demonstrates a new confidence and one can hear his comfort with the solid rhythm section (Wallington, Russell, and Haynes) and familiar blues chord progression.

"Lestorian Mode" was a reworking of John Carisi's "Israel," the minor key blues score for the Davis Nonet that had so enamored French jazz critic André Hodeir. Gitler was particularly impressed with its homage to Lester Young.

Lestorian Mode was especially intriguing because of the way Johnny Carisi used a Pres phrase as a basis for the line (the same phrase had been used in a different way by a group led by trumpeter Ray Linn on a number called *Where's Pres?* for the Atomic label in 1946) and the way he voiced the four horns. Later we were to be captivated by *Israel*, Carisi's piece for Miles Davis' nonet, but here he didn't have tuba and French horn at his disposal and still obtained an unusually rich blend. The piece has a 24-bar pattern with Moore as the only soloist. It obviously was not an easy chart to execute and there is a tentative quality about the ensemble in the initial take here, although Brew gets in some good licks. It all comes together on the second one with Moore floating above the horn trio and all moving parts meshing well.²⁹⁸

Mulligan scores an appealing countermelody for his baritone to offset Moore's tenor lead.

Klinkowitz notes Mulligan's experimentation towards collective improvisation in "Gold Rush," where the horns improvise a riff under Moore's solo, a

²⁹⁸ Gitler, Liner notes.

technique that he would continue to apply with his sextet of the mid-fifties. “This practice signals Mulligan’s cleverness and his temptations toward anarchy—precisely little holds these riffs together, at any moment threatening to dissolve into cacophony (a factor in Mulligan’s writing destined to drive a future employer, Stan Kenton, nuts).”²⁹⁹

On April 10, 1949, Mulligan participated in the recording of the album *Early Modern: The Kai Winding Sextet* (Jazztone J-1263). He played baritone sax and wrote the arrangements for his composition “Crossing the Channel,” for George Wallington's “Godchild” (which he also arranged for the Miles Davis Nonet), and for the Winding originals “Bop City” and “Sleepy Bop.” He recalls:

He [Winding] was a sweetheart, a very, very good man, and an easy guy to work with. He took care of business. So, it was Kai and Brew on tenor, and me on baritone on the front line. The rhythm section was George Wallington, Curly Russell and Max Roach. It was a terrific band. We had a good time, and Max really didn't like Brew's playing for some reason. So, he would really play rough; he never would let the thing settle with Brew; he always kept him on edge. And then when he played for me he was a dream. I'm glad he didn't take on after me too, because Max could really be upsetting, but boy when he wanted to, Max could sure swing. He was great in that little band, for me. Brew might have a different opinion altogether. At that time we worked around a lot with the band at clubs in New York, and we did quite a bit of recording. At one point we went out to Kansas City and played Tootie's Mayfair, and that's where I first met [Bob] Brookmeyer. I guess he was a couple of years younger than me. . . Well this young valve trombone player came along. We hit it off right away because he was so bright and so talented and we had a great time. And that was the beginning of a long, long association.³⁰⁰

Winding (1922-1983), born in Aarhus, Denmark, came to the United States when his family emigrated here in 1943. His professional debut occurred six years

²⁹⁹ Klinkowitz, 48.

³⁰⁰ Mulligan, oral history.

later with the Shorty Allen band. After working with the dance orchestras of both Sunny Dunham and Alvino Rey, Winding joined the Coast Guard in 1942, and played in a service band led by Bill Schallen. For a short time after the war, he worked for Benny Goodman until 1946 when he landed a job as a featured soloist with the Stan Kenton Orchestra. On January 21, 1949, he was the trombonist on the first of the three Capitol sessions with the Miles Davis Nonet. The liner notes of the sextet album with Mulligan declare that “Kai, with his volatile and emphatic solo style, ranks with Jay Jay [J. J. Johnson] as one of the two major trombone products of bop.”³⁰¹ Winding collaborated with Johnson in 1954 on a series of highly successful trombone duet recordings.

The sextet album’s title, *Early Modern*, was chosen because “Possibly a decade from now the most avant-garde jazz of today will be ‘early modern’ to listeners who will have become accustomed to the new sounds and ideas that are bound to develop in years to come.”³⁰² All three members of the rhythm section were experienced modern jazz practitioners and had participated in Dizzy Gillespie’s 1944 quintet. Roach, an original member of that quintet, recalls, “Dizzy had heard me play either at Minton’s or Monroe’s Uptown House, and he said when he left Cab Calloway, he was gonna start a band and he’d like me to play with him. That was to me a great compliment because, even at that time, Dizzy was a legend, musically.”³⁰³ With respect to Wallington, Gillespie remembers that

³⁰¹ Liner notes to *The Kai Winding Sextet, Early Modern*, Jazztone J-1263, 1949.

³⁰² Ibid.

³⁰³ Gillespie, *To Be or Not. to Bop, Memoirs*, 206.

George Wallington, a young white guy, following our style, was a quiet student of our music. He wanted to learn how to play jazz piano, and he'd heard about me and sought me out. Music school was always open on the job, so I brought him into the group. He tried to play like Bud Powell. . . . We really didn't need Bud. We didn't need a piano player to show us the way to go. Piano players up to that point played leading chords. We didn't do that because we were always evolving our own solo directions. We needed a piano player to stay outta the way. The one that stayed outta the way the best was the one best for us. That's why George Wallington fitted in so well, because he stayed outta the way, and when he played a solo, he'd fill it up; sounded just like Bud.³⁰⁴

Wallington had joined Gillespie's group at the Onyx Club in 1944 when a club-owner objected to Billy Taylor's playing two competing clubs simultaneously. After that, Wallington played with Red Rodney, as well as with Charlie Parker.

Russell was the Gillespie quintet's original bass player. "Curley Russell started off with us and then Ray Brown took his place. Curley couldn't read well but he could swing. All of us used him—Yard, Coleman Hawkins—Curley got around, but his solos weren't in the vein of Jimmy Blanton, Oscar Pettiford, and Ray Brown."³⁰⁵

Despite the album's title and the modern jazz experience of the sextet's players, the arrangements often look back to the swinging straight-ahead numbers of Lester Young's post-Basie combos. "Bop City," named for the one-flight-up club in the Brill Building at 49th and Broadway where the musicians frequently worked, and based on a four-note riff, is the most bop-influenced of the four charts. Mulligan leaves lots of space for soloing by himself, Moore, Winding, and Wallington, and for several choruses of trading four-bar passages with Roach. Of the four soloists,

³⁰⁴ Ibid., 206-7.

³⁰⁵ Ibid., 231.

Mulligan seems to have the most difficulty navigating the rapid chord changes. He recalls, “I was tiptoeing on eggshells through this piece. It was obvious that I really didn’t know the progression and it’s always been a challenge, how to try to combine the two facilities [writing and playing], because one doesn’t really have much to do with the other.”³⁰⁶ Of the four charts, “Sleepy Bop” is probably Mulligan’s best arrangement with its stimulating ensemble passages that accompany and surround the solo sections. The “Crossing the Channel” theme combines three twelve-bar blues passages with an eight-bar release. Moore dominates the performance with his Lester Young-styled melodic solo in the second chorus. Winding and Wallington split the third chorus with Mulligan stumbling again in the fourth. The ensemble concludes after a Roach drum break. “Godchild” is a re-working of the Wallington number that Mulligan also arranged for the Davis Nonet. For the Nonet arrangement, Mulligan employed the full range of registers he had at his disposal to present the tune’s opening ascending theme. He moved the theme upward through the nearly five-octave range of available instruments, starting with Bill Barber’s tuba and culminating with Davis’s trumpet. The sextet arrangement is much less interesting, since the theme is presented in the low register by the baritone sax and trombone in unison and never rises above the midrange register.

Mulligan’s septet arrangements for “Knockout” by Wallington and “Igloo” by Lloyd were recorded on May 9, 1949, for three albums with Italian-born Wallington as leader (Regal 1196, Savoy XP-8112 and MG-12081). The liner notes begin:

It is certain that Signer Figlia, an opera singer, never dreamed that the 1-year old son he brought with him from Palermo, Italy, in 1925 would grow up to be an emissary with a message! Spreading the gospel of

³⁰⁶ Mulligan, oral history.

jazz has been George Wallington's forte since he quit high school at the age of 15 to gig with local NY units. One of the most prolific writers of modern jazz “standards” and a top keyboard attraction since the early ‘40s George has earned his “bread” with the top groups. His first major jazz gig was in 1944 at the Onyx Club with Dizzy Gillespie.

With the exception of Charlie Perry on drums and Buddy Stewart on vocals for “Knockout”, the personnel were the same as with the Brew Moore Septet. On “Knockout,” Mulligan scores himself on baritone to play unison with the long boppish line scatted by Stewart. Once again, he has trouble keeping up with the rapid changes during his solo. The out chorus features the richness of the sound Mulligan gets by packing the four horns in their middle to upper registers. Mulligan’s arrangement of “Igloo,” at a more relaxed tempo, provides ample space for personal expression. When Moore, Winding, and Mulligan each solo, they benefit from clever scoring in the ensemble accompaniment.

On August 23, 1949, a septet led by Kai Winding recorded four Mulligan arrangements for an album called *Early Bones* (Prestige P-24067). According to Leonard Feather, this Winding group participated in a prestigious event in the history of late forties jazz on Broadway.

When the [Royal] Roost closed, Kai took his men across the street to participate in the elaborate opening ceremonies of Bop City, a one-flight-up club in the Brill Building at 49th and Broadway. Kai shared the bill with Artie Shaw, who for this much-publicized occasion organized a vast orchestra with strings, playing classical works as well as jazz.³⁰⁷

Except for the fact that Roy Haynes replaced Max Roach on the drums, the personnel for *Early Bones* was the same as that for *Early Modern*, recorded four

³⁰⁷ Leonard Feather, Liner notes to *Early Bones*, Prestige P-24067, 1949.

months earlier. Mulligan performed and wrote the arrangements for his original, “Waterworks,” for Winding’s “A Night on Bop Mountain,” for “Broadway,” and for “Sid’s Bounce” by Pittsburgh pianist Jerry Kaminsky. According to Ira Gitler, “It [‘Sid’s Bounce’] was not named for Symphony Sid Torin, as most tunes containing the name ‘Sid’ were in those days, but for the head-waiter at the Three Deuces.”³⁰⁸

Mulligan’s “Waterworks” is based on the chords of the Frank Loesser tune “I Hear Music (1940).” He replaces the melody from the original song with a bop line stated by Moore on tenor and supported by the other three horns providing an interesting descending series of dissonant chords, with the baritone voiced above the trumpet. This offers a pleasant contrast to the bridge melody which is stated in unison by all four horns. Mulligan’s “Gold Rush” had been based on the chords of the standard tune, “Broadway.” For this session, he provides an arrangement for the original. Count Basie recorded the song in 1940 with Lester Young as the featured soloist, and Mulligan’s swinging arrangement with its tightly packed horns is a fitting tribute to the Basie tradition. In the twelve-bar blues “Sid’s Bounce” Mulligan’s wit shows through in the middle four bars of the first chorus where the baritone sax and trombone drone in their low registers, a contrast to the lush ensemble sound of the opening and closing four-bar segments. For the final chorus, Mulligan voices the two low horns in their highest register.

After the last of the Kai Winding dates, Mulligan began participating in jam sessions with J. J. Johnson and Zoot Sims at Tin Pan Alley, a hotel basement club on 49th Street owned by tenor saxophonist Georgie Auld. Since the club was centrally located between 52nd Street (the bebop hub) and Time Square (where the newer jazz

³⁰⁸ Ira Gitler, Liner notes to *Broadway*, Status 8036, 1949.

venues were opening), it attracted a steady stream of musicians who would sit in on the jam sessions. Out of this activity, former Woody Herman bassist Chubby Jackson assembled a twelve-piece band of young musicians, including Mulligan, to begin recording for Prestige. The band, billed as the “Chubby Jackson All Star Band,” consisted of three trumpets (Howard McGhee, Al Porcino, Don Ferrara), two trombones (J. J Johnson and Kai Winding), four saxes (Charlie Kennedy on alto, Zoot Sims and Georgie Auld on tenors, and Mulligan on baritone), piano (Tony Aless), bass (Jackson), and drums (Don Lamond). The session that occurred on March 15, 1950, resulted in the album entitled *Chubby Jackson: Sextet and Big Band* (Prestige PR-7641). The liner notes remark that “The actual recording, the first big band date recorded by Prestige was done in the old Cinemart studios in New York City. The studio was so small that the trumpet section had to face the wall to make for a better balance.”

Given this traditional big band configuration that goes all the way back to Jimmy Lunceford and Fletcher Henderson, the All Stars’ sound is more a throwback to an earlier age than a precursor to Mulligan’s styles of the fifties. He does contribute two arrangements, “So What” and “I May Be Wrong,” which unfortunately expose his creative stagnation of 1950 exacerbated by his worsening drug addiction. “So What,” scored without trumpets for Jackson, would be later reworked, renamed as “Apple Core,” and sold to Elliot Lawrence. The Lawrence version is a slower, more conservative big-band chart. The Jackson version pits the saxophones against the trombones in the vein of something that could have been done for the Winding combos. “I May Be Wrong” is a swinging dance arrangement

reminiscent of Mulligan's work with Krupa and Lawrence, replete with muted trumpets and supporting riffs. Klinkowitz observes that "The overall judgment of this work with Chubby Jackson is that Mulligan was both writing and playing as well as he ever had, yet in no way as innovatively as he would just a year later."³⁰⁹

Other Mulligan activities of 1949-1950 included playing and arranging for Georgie Auld's big band; backing up singer Mary Ann McCall with a group that included Al Cohn, Red Rodney, and Al Haig; participating with Stan Getz in a group that backed up Sarah Vaughn; and playing in a giant rehearsal band led by Gene Roland that included Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker. Mulligan recalls:

Gene had these grandiose ideas and he loved to have big, big, big bands—like 12 saxophones and 12 trumpets and 9 trombones, and it was fun, but it wasn't really my kind of thing. He would have them every once in a while. He would try to put something together. Nobody ever figured anything would ever come out of it. Gene was an arranger, but he was kind of a self-promoter. He was always trying to get something going, but he was always so loosely wrapped that you knew that he would never really get anything going. I mean, he was so laid back and he would write arrangements for the different bands that I was with and he was one of these fast, economical writers. By that I mean, he wrote as few notes as possible, and he was always writing repeats, and call this and repeat that and often the arrangements just didn't make any sense at all because he would make mistakes with the repeat marks. I can't tell you how many times I was with bands that would have some arrangement of Gene's and they come in and they'd try to figure out how the things went because you couldn't figure out the sequence of the parts. I remember Bird showing up for one of those things, you know. Gene loved it because he sat back and there's this band playing things like "Oh Them Saxes," and "Hold Them Trumpets," and he'd just let Bird blow, you know. Everybody loved that.³¹⁰

³⁰⁹ Klinkowitz, 57.

³¹⁰ Mulligan, oral history.

As Mulligan's addiction worsened, his creative urge was significantly suppressed, eventually leading to his loss of desire to write or even play jazz. "But things went from bad to worse at that point and I guess I became more and more strung out and really unhappy and depressed about the whole thing."³¹¹ Eventually, he grew so completely sickened with his situation and disgusted with himself that he left New York and went to Washington, DC where his parents were living. So at the age of twenty-three, Gerry Mulligan, who had worked with some of the biggest names in jazz, such as Gene Krupa, Claude Thornhill, Gil Evans, Stan Getz, Charlie Parker, and Miles Davis, was so burned out, that he decided to completely abandon the music scene.

I took off and headed for home with my tail between my legs, in a state of misery. And my father rented a room for me around the corner from where they had the apartment and I proceeded to try to kick, cold turkey, for a week or two, and went through those miseries. And he [my father] got me a job in a bank and it was funny, because it was the most depressing kind of job I could have had because my job was to register, in this branch bank, every check that came in and every check that went out. So I'm dealing with all of these thousands and thousands of dollars worth of checks, and of course I couldn't rub two nickels together.³¹²

Given his physical and mental state, the rigors and routines associated with working a steady job got the better of him, and after just a few days, he was ready to make a change again.

I remember it was autumn and I went out for the lunch break, and I'm walking around the town kicking through all the leaves, and I said, "What the hell am I doing here?" So I started to look for, you know, went to the musician's side of town and went to the club where I knew

³¹¹ Ibid.

³¹² Ibid.

they were playing in jazz groups and started to try to find a connection and get started all over again. I had a first class case of the miseries.³¹³

A few days later, he resumed his addiction.

Meanwhile, a would-be rescuer named Gail Madden arrived in New York from the West Coast armed with a mission to save wayward creative people who, like Mulligan, had succumbed to the horrors of heroin addiction. She was a former model and pianist who set up a project called Creative Research, an organization whose purpose was to release artists from the slavery of alcoholism and narcotics addiction. While Madden was looking for “patients” in southern California, Charlie Parker, whom she had met in Hollywood, told her that Mulligan and others had become addicts, and that they were in New York. Mulligan’s friend bassist Bill Crow recalls being introduced to Madden in Greenwich Village before he and Mulligan had ever met.

I met Gail before I knew Gerry, thanks to a drummer friend of mine by the name of Buzzy Bridgford. He introduced us at an apartment in Greenwich Village owned by a lady named Margo, who was apparently a \$100 a night hooker and was bankrolling Gail, who wanted to be a therapist and save all the junky musicians in New York. Charlie Parker had agreed to go along with all this and was first on her list. Gail’s plan was that, with Margo’s money, she would buy a brownstone and start a clinic and all the guys would come and live there so she could straighten them out and get them off junk. Buzzy, who knew all the inside jazz gossip, claimed that Joe Albany, Serge Chaloff, J. J. Johnson, Stan Levey, and Gerry were also going to be involved, but unfortunately for Gail, she had an argument with Margo and the whole idea collapsed.³¹⁴

³¹³ Ibid.

³¹⁴ Gordon Jack, *Fifties Jazz Talk: An Oral Retrospective* (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2004), 61-62.

While Madden was attempting to set up in New York, Mulligan was still living in Washington. He recalls:

Now, I didn't know anything about this [Madden's arrival in New York] because I had left and I guess I was fairly much off the scene before I left. So she came to New York with this kind of grand and glorious idea of a thing she called Creative Research. She wanted to get a place, a house that was big enough [to serve as Creative Research's New York treatment center], and she had backing with a friend who had saved tens of thousands of dollars. . . . She was a very nice person; my recollections of her and that whole period are very hazy. Gail had the idea of the three people she really wanted as the kind of center attraction for this house: Max Roach, George Wallington, and me.³¹⁵

Despite the fact that Mulligan had left New York, and was no doubt not interested in coming back to the scene just to participate in an experimental treatment, Madden was persistent.

But anyway, she insisted on trying to find me and found out, I guess through my friends, that I had gone home to Washington. Well, she started calling my father. My father never told me about the calls and wouldn't have anything to do with it, figuring that she's just going to take me back on to this scene of sin and degradation. . . . Gail was saying, "Well, I've got work for him to do and things for him to write" and my father had answered for me and said that "he doesn't want any of that; he's happy here at the bank." Finally, Gail turned up in Washington, and I guess she went to see my parents. I still didn't know anything about it, but apparently either she just kept searching until she found me at the jazz club, because I don't think that my father ever told her.³¹⁶

Madden was able to convince Mulligan to return to New York on the basis of her success in "treating" Bob Graettinger. Mulligan was aware of Graettinger's notable work with Stan Kenton such as "Thermopylae" and the four-part tone poem "City of Glass." These abstract works orchestrated for jazz big band have been

³¹⁵ Mulligan, oral history.

³¹⁶ Ibid.

considered influential. Gunther Schuller wrote that “If Graettinger sounds like anybody it is Ives—in the music’s multi-layered complexity, textural density and non-tonal language (especially *City of Glass*)—anticipating (not following) many of the European and avant-garde experiments of the ‘50s and ‘60s.”³¹⁷ Mulligan was impressed.

Well, when she [Madden] told me what she was trying to do and that she had, as part of the thing that she’d been working on, helped people kick their addictions, she told me about her work with Bob Graettinger, who was somebody that I had great admiration for. When she told me that Bob was such a mess; he was an alcoholic and just unable to function, was dying, and that she got him straightened out, I was more than willing to be a guinea pig for anything that she wanted to do.³¹⁸

Mulligan was also convinced that working with a “therapist” such as Madden could be his only hope of getting any kind of help, given the then current public and official attitude of addicts as criminals.

Finding some way of dealing with an addiction, especially in those days was very, very difficult. I had done all kinds of things, like going to the psychiatrist and having them tell me, “Well, you stay off of your use of heroin for six months and come back and we’ll talk about you going into analysis.” I said, “Listen, if I could stop using heroin for six months, I wouldn’t be here!” but they were scared to death to take on anybody because the police attitude was so intransigent and foolish. . . . Well, it’s not only that they treated me criminally; it’s that anybody that used drugs was really a second class citizen and didn’t deserve the rights of an individual.³¹⁹

³¹⁷ Leonard Feather and Ira Gitler, *The Biographical Encyclopedia of Jazz* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 268.

³¹⁸ Mulligan, oral history.

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*

Madden persuaded him to return to New York with her, and due to her failure to recruit either Max Roach or George Wallington, Mulligan was her only “patient” for the next two years.

She had her hands full to help me kick [the heroin habit]. And she was into all kinds of things, like – she told me what she was doing and it all sounded like a good idea. And to have somebody putting that focus on me, individually, really was a help, because I learned later in analysis that a great deal of the problem with almost any addiction of any sort is low self esteem; so to have somebody concentrating on my emotional problems was a help. At the same time, I think it was very harmful for what Gail was trying to do, because if she could have come to New York and had the cooperation of the three people that she wanted to focus on, then I think she could have done something really remarkable.³²⁰

As a believer in the power of suggestion, Madden would set out to influence Mulligan’s behavior as he slept.

But she did things like sleep conditioning; as I slept she would say things like “You don’t need this” and so on and so on, and try to change my attitude from looking at the world as depressive to taking an optimistic view, and it worked. The cloud of gloom started to lift off of me and I became ten years younger.³²¹

She eventually assured Mulligan that he no longer needed heroin and that he could revive and rejuvenate himself through his music.

But then as I started to brighten up my view, for instance when I played the piano, I was always playing the piano hard and she said, “You don’t have to play the piano so hard, easy.” And in a lot of simple ways, she opened up my own perspective about music and more than anything, my approaches to music. And I think in some ways I was probably a disappointment to her because she thought once I was somewhat healthy that I would dive right in and be writing a bunch of new music and I wasn’t ready for that.³²²

³²⁰ Ibid.

³²¹ Ibid.

³²² Ibid.

Nonetheless, Mulligan was soon writing new arrangements and reviving old ones. It was during this last year in New York before heading west that he first experimented with instrumentation that excluded the piano, a configuration that would become a Mulligan trademark after his arrival out west. “Before I left the east Coast for California, I had already started experimenting with a pianoless rhythm section, using trumpeters like Don Joseph, Jerry Lloyd, or Don Ferrara, with Peter Ind on bass and Al Levitt on drums.”³²³ The idea, Mulligan recalls, originated when Madden helped him assemble a tentette and rented a rehearsal hall to play his new arrangements. They wound up using Wallington on piano, however, because they loved the way he played.

It was her experiments that helped me when I got to L.A., since [by then], I already had an idea of what would and wouldn’t work [with respect to using or not using a piano]. The last record date I did in New York was in September for Prestige, playing my compositions with Allen Eager and George Wallington, among others. Gail played maracas on some titles, but the atmosphere was spoilt by Jerry Lloyd, who couldn’t pass up the opportunity of making jokes about her boobs bouncing up and down when she played. Jerry was an old-guard male chauvinist and couldn’t help it, but after a while, I sent the band home except for the saxes. I didn’t want to do that thing [“Mulligan’s Too,” an eighteen-minute blues jam with no horns but Mulligan and Eager] with just Allen and me, but I had to complete the album. . . . [After that,] I decided to leave New York because the drug scene was a little out of control and the work was rapidly drying up, so I sold my horns and Gail and I hitchhiked to California.³²⁴

The recordings from the tentette session for Prestige represent Mulligan’s most powerful and distinguishing work since the Davis Nonet. The resulting album, *Mulligan Plays Mulligan* (Prestige 7006), consists of seven numbers, all Mulligan

³²³ Jack, 145.

³²⁴ Ibid.

originals, scored for the group's unique instrumentation: two trumpets (Nick Travis and Jerry Hurwitz [Lloyd]), trombone (Ollie Wilson), tenor saxophone (Allen Eager), *two* baritone saxophones (Mulligan, Max McElroy), piano (Wallington), bass (Phil Leshin), drums (Walter Bolden), and Gail Madden on maracas. Years later, Mulligan explained to Ira Gitler, "She [Madden] was using maracas as a sizzle cymbal, and she had those guys playing very well together."³²⁵ Mulligan also acknowledged to Gitler that it was Madden who influenced him to drop the piano from his group, which he did in 1952 after his move to Los Angeles. He told Horricks that the idea for a pianoless group first occurred to him in New York because he did not like the way Wallington had been overshadowed in some bands. "To have an instrument with the tremendous capabilities of the piano reduced to the role of crutch for the horn solo was unthinkable." He believed that the piano was a "power base" in itself and therefore should be treated as a featured instrument. Horricks also notes that later in the 1950s, Mulligan himself played piano at concerts, in a Wallington-influenced style, and usually over blues changes. "But it was always as a soloist, seldom with another frontline instrument around."³²⁶

Given the bohemian nature of Mulligan's lifestyle at that time, it must have been difficult for him and Madden to recruit musicians of such caliber for the tentette. Gitler explains why he was able to pull it off.

Even when there is a tentative engagement in view, it's hard to round up the boys for a rehearsal. Getting them together to read just for the love of the music is really a problem. Gerry could always get them, not because he was such a great organizer but rather on the strength of his

³²⁵ Ira Gitler, "Obituary", *Jazz Times*, xxvi/5 (1996): 51.

³²⁶ Raymond Horricks, *Gerry Mulligan's Ark*, 31.

music. Everyone was interested in playing his compositions and arrangements. When there were no studios to be had, Gerry improvised. One afternoon he took a big band down by the lake in Central Park. It was an ideal location but the police thought otherwise.³²⁷

Essentially, the tentette was the Davis Nonet with the French horn, tuba, and alto saxophone replaced by a second trumpet, a second baritone saxophone, and tenor saxophone. Mulligan viewed these modifications as an improvement.

The main difference being that I added a saxophone so I had two baritones. I had a baritone playing with the ensemble and I was freed up for more of a solo role. I could do more things with the additional trumpet and baritone because that gave an extra dimension to the possibilities of arranging. I always felt that in the *Birth of the Cool* band, we could have used a second trumpet. Miles was always able to pull it off but he had his horn in his face a lot during the course of the night. You know, he played solos and he played lead and he was playing backgrounds. So, it really is an awful lot for one player to do. So, I wanted to split those chores.³²⁸

For the tentette session, Mulligan reworked two charts he had written and arranged for Elliot Lawrence's big band: "Mullenium" and "Bweebida Bobbida." Four of the numbers, "Funhouse," "Ide's Side," "Roundhouse," and "Kaper" were new creations, while "Mulligan's Too" is an eighteen-minute blues jam that takes up the entire "B" side.

The first tune, "Funhouse," is particularly appealing in that with it, Mulligan proclaims his unique choice of instrumentation. The arrangement begins with the two baritones announcing an ostinato figure in unison without accompaniment. One of the baritones then breaks off into a different but complimentary line. Eventually the tenor sax enters in its lower register with a third line, the result sounding almost like a

³²⁷ Gitler, Liner notes to *Mulligan Plays Mulligan*, Prestige 7006, 1951.

³²⁸ Mulligan, oral history.

three-part Bach invention. After the rhythm section enters, Mulligan's solo emerges as the other two saxophones drop out. The "Bach invention" section returns each time a soloist finishes, giving a pleasant sense of unity to the chart. "Ide's Side" is a swinging Basie-style jump number with polyphonic riffs. Despite the fast tempo of "Roundhouse," its lighter attack, subtle swing, and trumpet lead are reminiscent of the Davis Nonet sound. With "Kaper," the main theme is initially presented in unison by the six horns which break into a pleasantly rich harmony towards the end of the melodic phrase. This approach is also applied in "Mullenum" with the three saxophones only.

The trombone is the most understated instrument on the session recordings: there are no trombone solos in any of the arrangements, and in the ensemble work, there are few if any independent trombone lines. That is curious because Mulligan had recently recorded multiple times with Kai Winding where the trombone was prominent.

Klinkowitz observes that with this tentette, Mulligan signals a new stylistic direction.

There are no self-consciously intellectual bebop numbers like "A Night on Bop Mountain" and Wallington's "Godchild." . . . Instead Mulligan shows his hand in the style of song he writes for this group: steady, deliberate swing, with melodies songlike in their simplicity but with chordal richness. . . . For Gerry Mulligan in 1951, leading his first group with full authority for choice of material and instrumentation, it is a decisive signal that his own tutelage within the Parker-Davis-Gillespie concepts of bebop had ended and that for the decade just beginning he would look back to Lester Young's own innovations.³²⁹

³²⁹ Klinkowitz, 60.

Mulligan had reached a point where he was ready to take charge—as a soloist, composer/arranger, and group leader. As a baritone saxophone player, he was particularly beginning to gain recognition. Horricks observes:

As a modern explorer with the baritone saxophone, his star was by now very much in the ascendant, while that of his earlier rival Serge Chaloff was fading fast. He had lightened the sound of the instrument without losing its essential richness and was playing long, supple and varied improvisations, making full use of every register, some of which carried over into his writing, for this would become more and more linear in character—as distinct from the short, accented phrases of say, his earlier “Rocker.” Sinewy, quickly-remembered melody lines, subtly shaped by the harmonies but invariably rhythmic, came as if instinctively from his pen during these years. And they were soon to form the basic repertoire of Gerry’s famous pianoless Quartet.³³⁰

In early 1952, Mulligan and Madden began their journey to the west coast.

“There was nothing to do. There were no opportunities. New York was in a real decline at that point. There was very little work and not enough work to support myself, or support Gail and me at that point.”³³¹ Since Gail had friends in Los Angeles, including Bob Graettinger who was still working for Stan Kenton, she thought that there might be some opportunity for Mulligan there. Kenton was reorganizing his band, and perhaps Mulligan could write for him. “But we didn’t really just take off to Los Angeles; we went in stages. We stopped off for a couple of days in Newark where people had tried to help, guys at the radio station there or something, and there was obviously nothing to be done there.”³³² Then they went to Reading, Pennsylvania, where his brother Don lived. “So Gail and I rented a room,

³³⁰ Horricks, *Gerry Mulligan's Ark*, 30-1.

³³¹ Mulligan, oral history.

³³² *Ibid.*

and boy, the musicians and everybody in Reading were so glad to see me, and it was just great that I was there until they found out that I might stay, and then I felt that they all kind of froze up. They didn't need another musician in town, especially one with any kind of fame who could replace them."³³³

Unbeknownst to Mulligan, Don had contacted their parents to let them know that Gerry had arrived in Reading. Mr. and Mrs. Mulligan believed that if Gerry was still an addict, perhaps he could be "cured" in jail. So they contacted the authorities.

Mulligan's recollection:

And the first thing that I know, a couple of FBI agents show up at the door of our room and haul us downtown and search us and go through the whole number, and of course we had nothing. And then my father shows up with my brother and my mother. And I guess the FBI, at this point, was a little put out with my father because he had assured them his son the junkie was there, and of course, he was just doing this for my own good. Well, they had to let us go, and I was really pissed off for that one. You ask people for help, and this is the help you get. I really needed that!³³⁴

Realizing that he was not welcome in Reading, he and Madden began hitchhiking across the country. "I had no horn; I had very few belongings, and we had a couple of shoulder bags full of what remained of clothing, some music papers, books, and such. We hitchhiked our way across." Mulligan estimates that it took seven to ten days before they finally reached Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Well, in the early stages of hitchhiking, the long distance truckers were great. It was a lonely life for the guys who would travel by themselves. And even though they were not supposed to pick people up, we'd meet them at the truck stops and they'd say, "Well come on, I'm going to Pittsburgh. I'll give you a lift that far." And we'd ride with them, and some of the guys were just great and helpful and friendly. . . . And

³³³ Ibid.

³³⁴ Ibid.

then we started picking up rides with individuals. That's when it got a little scary because some of these cats we ran into were such cowboys driving. You'd ride with your heart in your mouth. But that got us into Albuquerque.³³⁵

During the postwar boom of the early 1950s, Albuquerque was a major stop along Route 66, the 2,000-mile highway that connected Chicago to Los Angeles, so it is not surprising that Mulligan and Madden ended up there. When they got to Albuquerque, Mulligan looked up Dick Hilbert, a jam session drummer he had worked with in New York.

He [Hilbert] played drums and I played alto at that point, and we'd spend hours playing [in New York] until the jam session scene drove him out. At these sessions, the rhythm sections would sit and play at these breakneck tempos, and the first saxophone would play ninety-five [improvised solo] choruses, and then the trumpet player would play ninety choruses and then another saxophone player would play ninety choruses, and in the meantime, the bass is in the background going, "doom-doom-doom-doom" and the drummer's going, "ding-ding-ding-ding," and then finally, when all the horns had worn themselves out, then the piano player gets to play a solo. Well, the piano player would maybe get a couple of choruses in, and one of the horn players starts playing again! In the meantime, the bass player and the drummer would never get to play solos. But they were there, the crutch for the rest of the guys for all this period. Well, it started to ruin the wrists of my friend [Hilbert], because he said he was just playing endlessly, hour after hour at these fast tempos, just the same thing over and over again, and he started to get knots in his tendons. So he finally gave it up and became a clinical psychologist, and then finally a teacher of psychology, and he was teaching at that point [1952] in Albuquerque.³³⁶

Thanks to contacts he made through Hilbert, Mulligan was able to get a job playing for a western swing band, an experience that he enjoyed. "It [western swing]

³³⁵ Ibid.

³³⁶ Ibid.

kind of harks back to, not exactly the Dixie[land] days, but it's kind of swinging two beat or kind of stomping four beat, so musically, it was fun."³³⁷

It is not surprising that Mulligan fit in. Tommy Morrell, an acclaimed steel guitar virtuoso of the genre, defines western swing as "an amalgam of jazz, blues, big band, polka music, country music . . . everything."³³⁸ Jean Boyd says that it is "swing jazz played on traditional country instruments, with all the required elements of jazz and some of the best solo improvisation to be heard. . . It belongs in the same league as Benny Goodman and Tommy Dorsey, not in the 'hillbilly' category."³³⁹ Boyd believes that "country" is an inappropriate and misleading label for western swing, and that western swing should be included in studies devoted to swing jazz. With respect to instrumentation, Boyd notes that many western swing bands would use one or two horns (trumpet and/or saxophone), and that most of the horn players came from and returned to swing bands. Since western swing overtook swing in popularity in the late 1940s, the reason for their sojourn was financial.³⁴⁰

The most celebrated saxophonists of the style were Glenn "Blub" Rhees (1925-1995) and Billy Briggs (b. 1925), both contemporaries of Mulligan. Apparently, these two were particularly adept at playing in "sharp" keys. Boyd especially acknowledges Rhees' skill: "Playing in string bands did not inhibit Glenn's technical prowess or his creative bent at improvisation. He was as much the

³³⁷ Ibid.

³³⁸ Jean A. Boyd, *The Jazz of the Southwest: An Oral History of Western Swing* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998), ix.

³³⁹ Ibid.

³⁴⁰ Ibid., 226.

consummate jazz saxophonist in those ‘hillbilly keys’ as others in the more familiar tonal territory of typical horn bands. He proudly wore his nickname, the ‘Sax Maniac,’ because he had truly earned it.”³⁴¹ As a result of how their instruments are tuned, string players prefer sharp keys such as “E” and “A,” forcing horn players to follow suit. Since “E” and “A” transpose to “C# (7 sharps)” and “F# (6 sharps)” for alto and baritone saxophonists, it is understandable why they would prefer the “flat” keys (e.g., “F”, “Bb,” Eb”) that are popular in jazz. This added challenge must have been appealing to Mulligan since he found his experience playing this swing-like music in Albuquerque pleasurable, sharp keys or not.

And they got a horn for me and I told them about the union thing [termination for non-payment of dues], and they said, “That’s ok, man. We’ll straighten it out with the local union. ” And I played there for a couple of months. And we were able to get on our feet again a little bit, as far as money was concerned, and we had a good time, because Hilbert was a good friend, and we enjoyed being with him and other musicians and guys that he knew from the college around there. So it was a good period. It was kind of a rest between big city life [between New York and Los Angeles]. And so Albuquerque kind of became a lucky destination at that point.³⁴²

Despite the fact that Mulligan liked his time in Albuquerque, the probability of sustaining himself there was slim. There were also opportunities to pursue on the west coast through Madden’s contacts. So after a few months, they left for Los Angeles where, under Madden’s wing again, Mulligan landed an arranging job with one of the most well-known big bands in the country.

I don’t remember how we got to Los Angeles, whether we hitched a ride or somebody drove us there or we took a bus or what—just a total blank. So when we showed up there [Los Angeles] then, we met up

³⁴¹ Boyd, 231.

³⁴² Mulligan, oral history.

with [Bob] Graettinger and some of Gail's friends. She felt at home because she was now amongst friends. And we got ourselves kind of settled there, and got me in [employed] with [Stan] Kenton and as I say, Kenton was just reorganizing then.³⁴³

The Stan Kenton Orchestra would prove to be the antithesis of everything Gerry Mulligan had been doing for the past five years.

³⁴³ Ibid.

Stan Kenton Orchestra

And Stan's [Kenton] band to me was some kind of way symbolic of the end of the bands as I loved them. It had gotten too big and too pompous. You know, it took itself so seriously. Like just something terribly Wagnerian about it all. Well, I once said, thinking I was being humorous, that Stan is the "Wagner of Jazz" and then realized afterwards—because he had done a thing with the transcriptions of the Wagner pieces, and tried to conduct them—that he really saw himself that way and didn't see any humor in it at all! But I hated what that band stood for because it was like the final evolution of wrongly taken points.³⁴⁴

The big band sounds that jazz listeners most often associate with the West Coast in the postwar years are those of the various Stan Kenton ensembles. The Kenton sound, represented by a discography of over 150 albums between 1945 and 1955, catalyzed a movement that resulted in the propagation of a horde of West Coast jazz bands influenced by Kenton personnel, instrumentation, and stylistic approaches. It was his obsession with creating, performing, and recording his "neophonic" jazz, replete with new effects and different sounds, that led to both frequent negative criticism on the one hand, and a host of admiring emulators on the other.

To his postwar fans, Kenton represented the thrill, power, and freedom of modern jazz. Here was a big band that was moving forward, exploring new territory, and leaving the old ways behind. On the other hand, Kenton detractors focused on his excess. Ted Gioia remarks that "If the Ellington band was a train and Sun Ra a spaceship, the Kenton band was, some might suggest, more like one of those overbuilt Detroit cruisers of the 1950s."³⁴⁵ Bandleader Ward Kimball described the Kenton group as "Too many chrome gadgets and not enough fundamental design."³⁴⁶

³⁴⁴ Gerry Mulligan, quoted in Gitler, *Swing to Bop*, 247.

³⁴⁵ Ted Gioia, *West Coast Jazz* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 144.

The mainstream jazz press was particularly critical of the Kenton style.

George Simon recalls his first review of Kenton after he saw the band perform at Los Angeles radio studio KHJ in 1941.

“Within the Stan Kenton band,” the review noted, “nestles one of the greatest combinations of rhythm, harmony and melody that’s ever been assembled by one leader.” Then after crediting Kenton with most of the bands good points, including his arrangements, while also extolling several of the young musicians, . . . I faulted the band for “continual blasting. It’s great to screech with complete abandon,” the review said, “but you’ve got to screech at the right time.” It also suggested that Stan “curb his gesticulative enthusiasm” and in general recommended “greater restraint.” . . . One thing I found out immediately: there’s nothing more vociferous than a Kenton fan. The mail starting coming in at once, faulting me for faulting the band.”³⁴⁷

Barry Ulanov said that the Kenton band had “that combination of heavy voicings and staccato phrasings down. But there’s no reason why so formidable an organization must always sound like a moving man grunting under the weight of a concert grand.”³⁴⁸

Miriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary defines “kitsch” as “something that appeals to popular or lowbrow taste and is often of low quality.” Gary Giddins observes that among the peculiarities of jazz is the relative scarcity of kitsch. He identifies Kenton, however, as the rare counterexample.

A vast oasis of jazz kitsch exists, however, and the place to find it is in the New Directions in Neophonic, Mellophonic, Supersonic, Progressive, Innovative Artistry of Stan Kenton. . . . Kenton’s music is a subject that eludes but never completely alienates me. The pomposity is staggering in a deeply kitschlike way. Not for him an album of standards or blues, but rather *Adventures in Standards* and

³⁴⁶ Ibid.

³⁴⁷ Simon, 293.

³⁴⁸ Ibid., 294.

Adventures in Blues. Like Berlioz, he believed that more was more; build a bigger stage, and he would build a bigger orchestra. His response to every fashion in jazz or pop was “Mine is bigger than yours.” Everything he did was hyped as newly broken ground. The reality was shrieking brasses and Latin percussion. His kitsch masterpieces are *Kenton/Wagner* (the Valkyries ride to the pounding of . . . bongos) and *Stan Kenton! Tex Ritter!* The punch line of the former is not the amalgamation of apparent opposites, but similarities between the two; they’re a perfect match, a sort of sturm and real slow drang. . . . In each case, the outlandishness is real, sincere, exquisitely and deliberately awful.³⁴⁹

Joining Simon, Ulanov, and Giddins were other jazz critics such as Ralph Gleason, Nat Hentoff, and Leonard Feather who also never liked Kenton. In the foreword to William Lee’s biography of Kenton, Mort Sahl takes exception to this attitude, which he claims represents a political agenda.

The critics never liked Stan. First, on intellectual grounds: the music was formal, written. It “didn’t swing.” (Ask Zoot Sims. Ask Stan Getz.) Critics used their impeccable liberal credentials to define the struggle with this man who threatened their *status quo*. . . . Kenton’s revolution in the use of brass, his Progressive Jazz period and the Innovations Orchestra excited the people and threatened, thus frightened the press. When all else failed, they politicized the struggle once more and labeled him a rightist. . . . It’s not right versus left . . . it’s the individual versus the group. Stan was first an individual. Right-wing? No, anti-collective. If the truth were known, the bourgeoisie in jazz objected not to what he had to say so much as his right to say it.³⁵⁰

Kenton, born in Wichita, Kansas on December 15, 1911, was, like Mulligan, the son of a job-hopping father. Floyd Kenton worked as a tombstone salesman, grocer, mechanic, roofer, and carpenter.³⁵¹ It was his mother who started Stan on piano lessons at age twelve after the family moved to Bell, California. As a teen,

³⁴⁹ Giddins, 328.

³⁵⁰ Mort Sahl, Foreword to William F. Lee, *Stan Kenton: Artistry in Rhythm* (Los Angeles: Creative Press, 1980).

³⁵¹ Gioia, *West Coast Jazz*, 145.

Kenton experimented with banjo, saxophone, clarinet, and trumpet until he settled on arranging as his primary focus. He remembers, “From the time I was 14 years old, I was all music. Nothing else ever entered my mind.”³⁵² He sold his first arrangement of Riccardo Drigo’s *Serenade* for seven dollars to a Long Beach octet in 1928.

During the Depression, he was fortunate enough to earn a living playing a series of gigs with various dance bands. In 1933, Everett Hoagland, whom George Simon deemed “the most danceable and least boring of music’s mickey mice,”³⁵³ hired Kenton to arrange and play piano for his “swinging” band when it opened at the Rendezvous at Balboa Beach in August. Hoagland sideman Bill Jones recalls that “Stan had progressed so far ahead of piano players in that time. He was playing tenths in the left hand, when most pianists were playing octaves. Stan always had a beautiful choice of progressions of the chords in his playing.”³⁵⁴ In 1936, George Arhneim, who had gained fame in the 1920s as the leader of a popular dance band that featured such vocalists as Bing Crosby, hired Kenton to help him put together a jazz orchestra. In 1938, Vido Musso, who a year before had been a featured tenor saxophonist for Benny Goodman, enlisted Kenton to help him organize an eighteen-piece band. Musso recalls, “Stan joined me, made all the arrangements and also played piano. We did a lot of one-nighters up north and back to Los Angeles and Redondo Beach. After a year of that, I quit and rejoined Goodman. Stan took over my band and worked his way to fame.”³⁵⁵ Kenton came off the road in 1939 when he

³⁵² Lee, 8.

³⁵³ Simon, 492.

³⁵⁴ Lee, 18.

³⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 24.

secured a position as pianist and assistant conductor of the pit orchestra at the Earl Carroll Theater in Hollywood.

After about a year at the Carroll Theater, despite the financial security this position afforded him, Kenton decided to resign so that he could devote his energies to organizing a rehearsal band to play his original arrangements. He remembers that “I felt that I wanted this music to be heard and it seemed there was no other way other than possibly starting my own band, which of course became a reality.”³⁵⁶ After several months of rehearsing two or three times a week, on November 1, 1940, Kenton took the thirteen-piece band to the Music City Record Shop in Hollywood to make the first test pressings. The group recorded Kenton arrangements of his originals “Etude for Saxophones,” “A Reed Rapture,” and “Theme” (“Artistry in Rhythm”); as well as of seven standards: “La Cumparsita,” “Lamento Gitano,” “Ay, Ay, Ay,” “That’s for Me,” “Gambler’s Blues,” “Body and Soul,” and “Stardust.”

Armed with the audition records and his tenacity, Kenton worked tirelessly to promote the band. His efforts eventually paid off when, in January 1941, he secured a Saturday night booking into the Pavilion at Huntington Beach and another for a dance at the Diana Ballroom in Los Angeles. This led to a successful February audition at the Rendezvous ballroom in Balboa, a night club that was then considered southern California’s center of big band jazz. The opening at the Rendezvous on May 30, 1941, was a commercial success, and soon thereafter, Los Angeles radio station KHJ began broadcasting the band on an evening show called “Balboa

³⁵⁶ Ibid., 28

Bandwagon” three times a week. The resulting growing popularity prompted Kenton to continue to add new charts to the band’s book including arrangements of such diverse pieces as “Arkansas Traveler” and Rachmaninoff’s Prelude in C Sharp Minor.

The personnel at the Rendezvous included trumpet players Frankie Beach (age seventeen), Chico Alvarez, and Earl Collier. All three had studied the “non-pressure” system of brass playing which gave them extraordinary stamina and high register facility, contributing to a sound that would soon be associated with all Kenton organizations. Howard Rumsey, who was one of the first bassists to use an amplifier, also contributed to the developing signature sound. Other personnel included saxophonists Jack Ordean, Red Dorris (who also provided vocals), Bill Lahey, Ted Romersa, and Bob Gioga; trombonists Dick Cole and Harry Forbes; guitarist Al Costi; drummer Marvin George; and vocalist Kay Gregory.

When Kenton was asked to describe the band for the August 1941 issue of *Metronome*, he replied, “We don’t play dixieland or boogie woogie. We don’t even play rumbas, but we do play a strictly musical jazz, without novelties, with musical interest and easy to dance to.”³⁵⁷ Kenton recalls his obsession with stimulating interest in the band and things he would do at the Rendezvous to enhance his national image.

We would let all the people in off the beach, no admission charge, even in their bare feet and bathing suits, to hear our broadcast so that we could have an audience there, so that the people back East could hear us playing our music to a crowd and hear some kind of reaction. We commenced these broadcasts and, like magic, we started hearing from people throughout the Middle West. First they [the broadcasts] were only carried to Kansas City and then they got into the East, and this was the thing that actually started calling attention to what we were doing at the Rendezvous Ballroom. I can remember each time

³⁵⁷ Lee, 35.

we went on the air, it was a try for dear life to play as well as we could and hope that somebody would hear us that might become interested in the band.³⁵⁸

The engagement at the Rendezvous concluded at the end of the summer, and on September 11, the band recorded Kenton arrangements “Taboo,” “Adios,” and “The Nango,” its first commercial discs, for Decca Records in Hollywood. A short time later, thirty more titles were recorded for C.P. MacGregor Transcriptions, also in Hollywood. One of those titles was the Kenton “Theme,” which, in 1943 would be renamed. Kenton explains, “I felt that we should have a theme song too, so I started toying with what it should be and I wrote the piece of music that was later known as ‘Artistry in Rhythm.’”³⁵⁹ The title was chosen to match the band’s signature slogan. The song’s melody was derived from “Invocation to the Nymphs” in Maurice Ravel’s ballet *Daphnis et Chloé*.

Kenton’s soaring popularity led to a sold-out November 25th performance at the prestigious Hollywood Palladium on Sunset Boulevard. This was followed by a booking at the Roseland Ballroom in New York City that was supposed to last eight weeks. The band had worked its way across the country playing one-nighters in Las Vegas, Cornell University, and at other venues. Despite great anticipation, the Roseland engagement was terminated after less than two weeks. The publicity that had preceded the band promised more than what Kenton could deliver. He recalls that “It was because it [the Roseland] was a taxi dance hall and people weren’t used to dancing to swing music. They wanted rumbas and tangos and all sorts of dance

³⁵⁸ Lee, 37.

³⁵⁹ Ibid., 42-3.

music that we were not prepared to play. We were to be there eight weeks and we lasted ten days and they threw us right out in the street.”³⁶⁰

Despite this and other setbacks, Kenton’s standing in the jazz world continued to rise over the next several years, and even his detractors, such as columnist George Frazier, began to acknowledge his preeminence.

I’m very much afraid that the Stan Kenton Orchestra is going to be the great devastating success that its admirers predicted that it would be, and I’m afraid too that there’s nothing to be done about it. Kenton’s in; he’s a cinch.³⁶¹

The war decimated the ranks of the band, and eventually, Red Dorris, Bob Gioga, and Harry Forbes were the only original Kenton sidemen left. Most of the other musicians had left the band to join the service. Easton observes:

The band became a revolving door through which new sidemen entered and left in bewildering profusion, as their draft numbers came up. Some were hopelessly inept and left even before their uniforms, now with cuffless “victory pants,” were paid for. When that happened, it was the road manager’s Gioga’s task to persuade the *next* replacement to pay thirty-five dollars for a uniform that cost the band forty-five dollars.³⁶²

Despite the war’s negative impact on morale and finances, Kenton managed to book the band into a group of New England ballrooms known as the Shribman circuit in the summer of 1942. This was followed by an eight-week engagement at Frank Dailey’s Meadowbrook in New Jersey, a fortuitous booking since the performances were broadcast nationally. Simon’s *Metronome* review of the band at Meadowbrook was mixed. “That intense driving is the Kenton band’s chief characteristic. It’s also

³⁶⁰ Ibid., 47.

³⁶¹ George Frazier, “Stan Kenton Turns Minneapolis 'Innovations' into Music Appreciation”, *Downbeat*, April 1942, 8.

³⁶² Carol Easton, *Straight Ahead: The Story of Stan Kenton* (New York: William Morrow & Company, 1973), 80-1.

one of its chief drawbacks. . . . Once the rest of the outfit gets out from the terrific pressure that it has developed for itself, once it learns to play easier, more relaxed jazz that isn't always trying to get there ahead of the beat, then the Stan Kenton band is really going to come into its own."³⁶³

In June 1943, Kenton returned to the Palladium in Los Angeles, a homecoming of sorts, for a four-week engagement. In its July issue, *Downbeat* reported that Kenton had "drastically" altered his style.

When he started out with his band from the west coast not much more than a year ago, here was one bandleader with original ideas for scoring, plenty of ambition and guts. In the face of critical side-swipes from swing authorities, band bookers, fans, and song publishers, Kenton plugged along with something that he felt, knew, was right; a kind of music that would be consistently hep, exciting, and powerhouse. "Every tune a production" was the Kenton idea and he worked hard at it. . . . Now, after listening to all the complaints and mulling over all the possibilities, Kenton has relented. Tune in to the band during its present stay at the Palladium and you'll hear three pop songs of the day to every Kenton super-arrangement.³⁶⁴

After Kenton closed at the Palladium on July 23rd, he booked numerous one-nighters on the west coast, including a date at the Orpheum Theater in Los Angeles and a performance for the Armed Forces Special Services *One Night Stand* series.

By the end of the year, Kenton replaced Skinnay Ennis as Bob Hope's bandleader, performing on the weekly nationally broadcast *Bob Hope Pepsodent Radio Show* and traveling with Hope to entertain the troops. The band was relegated to performing background music and accompanying featured vocalists, a role that led Kenton to believe, after two weeks, that signing with Hope was a mistake. He complained to Hope and threatened to leave, telling him:

³⁶³ George Simon, "Norvo and Kenton Bands Impressive," *Metronome*, August 1942.

³⁶⁴ "Kenton Style Altered Drastically," *Downbeat*, July 1943, cited in Lee, 69-70.

This thing stinks. [Singer Frances] Langford is acting like an idiot, [comedian] Jerry Colonna is out of his head, they're both trying to undermine everything we do. We're music, and you're comedy. We don't fit into this. I don't want to have fun made of me, like Skinny Ennis, how skinny I am.³⁶⁵

Hope convinced him to stay on the basis of the fact that if he left, it would give the industry the impression that he had been fired. Kenton relented, and the contracted relationship with Hope would last thirty-nine weeks. In addition to playing the show, the band continued to play one-nighters in and around Los Angeles.

Several notable performers were added within the next year. Gifted alto saxophonist Art Pepper joined the band in September, 1943. Pepper had played for Gus Arnheim in 1942 before working with Charlie Mingus, Dexter Gordon, Lee Young, and Benny Carter on Central Avenue, the heart of the African-American jazz scene in Los Angeles. When tenor saxophonist Maurice Beeson left the band in January 1944, he was replaced by Stan Getz, then sixteen years old. Born in New York City, Getz had already worked in the bands of Jack Teagarden, Dale Jones, and Bob Chester. When tenor saxophonist/vocalist Red Dorris was drafted, singer Dolly Mitchell left with him. Mitchell was replaced by Anita O'Day, who had already made a name for herself with Gene Krupa's band. Easton observes that "[Kenton manager] Carlos [Gastel] negotiated the truly marvelous mismatching of supersquare Stanley, who could barely bring himself to say *damn*, and superswinger O'Day, whose favorite adjective was *fucking*."³⁶⁶ In addition to these personnel changes, Kenton increased the size of the brass section from six to ten players.

³⁶⁵ Easton, 85.

³⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 87.

In November, Kenton was approached by Glenn Wallichs, who had recently formed a new record company (which would become Capitol Records) with Johnny Mercer and G.B. Buddy DeSylva. Kenton had been growing dissatisfied with Decca because he felt that, because it was such a huge organization, he was not getting the exposure he deserved. He accepted Wallichs' offer to join Capitol with the hope that the result would be greater recognition for him and the band. As soon as he signed with Capitol, the band recorded "Do Nothin' Til you Hear from Me," "Harlem Folk Dance," and two tunes that would become hits: "Eager Beaver," a riff-based chart with a catchy tune, and the now formally named "Artistry in Rhythm." Johnny Mercer was particularly enamored of "Eager Beaver" and insisted that Kenton write and record more tunes like it. Kenton's rejection of anyone telling him how or what to write led to many heated battles between Kenton and Capitol's management. Eventually, Wallichs agreed to a compromise: Kenton would get recording studio autonomy in exchange for his agreeing to publicly promote other Capitol artists such as Peggy Lee, Jo Stafford, and Margaret Whiting.³⁶⁷

With respect to helping to sustain the band's reputation for its big dramatic sound, arguably, the most important person to join Kenton over the next several years would be arranger Pete Rugolo. Rugolo recalls how he was recruited while still in the service.

Jimmy Lyons, who was then a disc jockey, had heard my service band, and he told Stan about me. He told him that there was a guy who wrote just like him, and that he was going to send me to see him. So when Stan was playing at the Golden Gate Theater, I went up to him and handed him five or six arrangements I had brought. . . . Then one day in the barracks I got a call, and it was from Stan Kenton. . . . One day at a rehearsal the [Kenton] band had run out of new things to

³⁶⁷ Ibid., 86-87.

rehearse, so Vido Musso reminded Stan about the charts I had given him. So Stan went searching in his trunk and dug up the music and passed it out to the band. After they played it, Stan was excited about the music and called me. He said I wrote more like Kenton than he did. He offered me a job for when I got out of the service.³⁶⁸

Rugolo had attended San Francisco State, then Mills College, where he studied with Darius Milhaud. He remembers, “At SF State, Ravel and Wagner were about as modern as they got, but at Mills everything revolved around modern classical music, the twelve-tone row, and the avant-garde.”³⁶⁹ After spending time performing piano in the swing style of Teddy Wilson at Sweet’s Ballroom in Oakland, Rugolo enlisted in the service. After his discharge in 1945, he joined Kenton, and as Rugolo recalls, “For four or five years, I was with the band full-time, I wrote probably about ninety percent of the band’s material.”³⁷⁰ He remembers his association with Kenton as “an arranger’s idea of paradise” where he could “write anything he wants to and still make a living.”³⁷¹

With respect to Rugolo’s music, Shipton observes that he “was quick to absorb the harmonic language of bebop, if not its rhythmic implications, but he was also interested in numerous other ideas, and the main bebop qualities in his mid 1940s arrangements tend to come from the band’s impressive array of soloists rather than the charts themselves.”³⁷² An example is his “Unison Riff (1947)” which features impressive trumpet and alto saxophone (Art Pepper) solos integrated into a swing-

³⁶⁸ Gioia, *West Coast Jazz*, 147.

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 148.

³⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁷¹ Lee, 80.

³⁷² Shipton, 541.

leaning arrangement which ends with a series of very big chords. For the 1950 “Innovations of Modern Music” Kenton orchestra, Rugolo wrote several successful classically-oriented charts including “Conflict,” “Lonesome Road,” and “Mirage.” He remembers that he and Kenton were ideal collaborators. “He [Kenton] never really changed anything I wrote, even though I would do some daring things with time signatures or dissonances, or classical things.”³⁷³ At the 2003 International Association of Jazz Educators Conference, Terry Vosbein described Rugolo’s unique treatment of tone color and harmony.

One thing noticeably different in the Rugolo scores is his affinity for timbral variety. Within the limited palette of nine to ten brass and five saxophones he found unlimited sounds, whether mixing instrument families or combining different brass mutes. [Rugolo recalls that] Kenton “played everything open in those days, the brass blowing. And I [Rugolo] introduced some tone color. I’d put two trumpets in Harmon, one trumpet in another kind of mute and one open.” And his use of the rhythm section is one of color and melody as much as one of time keeping. He also frequently combined instruments from different sections to achieve more timbral diversity. . . . Rugolo was one of the first to take full advantage of five trumpet players, frequently giving them five different pitches when playing a chord, rather than merely having the fifth player double the lead player an octave below. His sax section also tended to play five different pitches. His voicings contain chords built on thirds and fourths, as well as dissonant clusters. At first he found resistance from the players, unaccustomed to playing dissonant intervals. But they grew to appreciate the new sounds Rugolo was bringing to them. What at first seemed quite foreign to the musicians, soon became their basic vocabulary.³⁷⁴

In 1946, Kenton’s eighteen-piece “Artistry in Rhythm Orchestra” was named “Band of the Year” by *Look* Magazine, and sixty percent of the individual winners of the jazz polls of *Downbeat*, *Metronome*, and *Variety* were Kenton sidemen.

Drummer Shelly Manne would also join the band in 1946, and his subsequent

³⁷³ Gioia, *West Coast Jazz*, 149.

³⁷⁴ Terry Vosbein, “Pete Rugolo and Progressive Jazz,” *Proceedings of the International Association of Jazz Educators Conference, Long Beach, 2003*.

influence on the Kenton sound was greatly admired by Gerry Mulligan. “But Shelly and Mel [Lewis] were the only two drummers that ever played with that [Kenton] band who had delicacy. You know, everybody approaches that band like a boiler factory and bringing delicacy to it was an element that made it that much more musical.”³⁷⁵ Easton provides a rather astute analysis of Manne’s style which would explain its appeal to Mulligan.

Shelly Manne grasped a subtle and crucial fact that escaped Stan’s critics: namely, that *there was more than one kind of swinging*. Although Stan’s band never swung in the conventional rhythmic sense, Shelly was able to move it by what he calls *sound pulsation*. The *momentum* of the sound made the band swing; it created excitement through sound and dynamics. Shelly demonstrated that “Textures and colors can make drums become really musical, rather than just a percussive thing.” Using little triangles, cymbal rolls, unorthodox glissandos on tom-toms and big cymbal flares, Shelly turned the drum chair into a color chair, irreversibly expanding the role of the drummer in the band.³⁷⁶

Mulligan, particularly after he joined the band as an arranger, considered Manne as a breath of fresh air who was capable of the tempering Kenton’s “heavy-handed” approach to big band drumming. Mulligan describes the typical scenario for the Kenton drummer.

About a 28-inch ride cymbal, and I swear, that thing was about a quarter inch thick. So, in order to get the thing to ring, man, you had to, like, get the stick and bring it all the way back over here and you run it down and it’s like, “Pow!” So, this cat’s back there and he’s trying to make time with it. It’s like, “Pow Pow Pow Pow!!” Oh God, I hated it. But Shelly didn’t do any of that stuff. Shelly played like Shelly. Of course, Stan didn’t dare say anything to him.³⁷⁷

³⁷⁵ Mulligan, oral history.

³⁷⁶ Easton, 106.

³⁷⁷ Mulligan, oral history.

When Manne was approached by trombonist Bill Harris to start an all-star jazz group in New York, he resigned from Kenton's band. In a later *Downbeat* interview regarding his rationale for leaving, he commented, "A night with that [Kenton] band made me feel like I'd been choppin' wood." In 1948, when he rejoined Kenton, the December 15 issue of *Downbeat* shows Kenton standing over an ax-wielding Manne who is chopping wood.³⁷⁸

In the spring of 1947, at the height of his popularity, Kenton decided to break up the band and cease operations. They had just completed a recording date at Capitol, and despite everyone being exhausted, headed out for a lengthy road trip through Texas and the Southwest. After coming down with the flu, vocalist June Christy convinced Kenton to allow her and Bob Cooper to take some time off in Miami. By the time the band reached Alabama, half the group was ill, and Kenton was suffering from total exhaustion. He released all of the members of the band and immediately sent a telegram to his booking agency that he was cancelling all engagements.

This interruption, however, was short-lived. Within four months, Kenton was getting a new band ready for an engagement at the Rendezvous in Balboa again. His new focus, "progressive jazz," was described in the November issue of *Metronome*.

Stan Kenton, his band re-formed, plans to produce music that's more progressive than ever. His huge new outfit will have two complete libraries, one for dances and one for concerts, and its personnel will include a famous Brazilian concert guitarist and a bongo drummer. Kenton, with the help of arranger Pete Rugolo, is definitely after more new sounds. He plans to display these on a series of concerts, while at the same time minimizing the importance of his outfit as a dance band. He feels that the American public is just about ready to accept jazz as

³⁷⁸ Lee, 111.

an art form for listening, and he decries the critics who claim that his is not a jazz band because it does not keep a steady beat.³⁷⁹

At the subsequent October 22 Capitol session, the band recorded six Rugolo charts: “Unison Riff,” “Lament,” “Prologue Suite,” “Impressionism,” “I told You I Love You, Now get Out,” and “He Was a Good Man as Good Men Go.” The concert repertoire of the band included a series of new “Artistry” numbers, also provided by Rugolo, including “Artistry in Bolero,” “Artistry in Percussion,” “Artistry in Boogie,” and “Artistry Jumps.” Other classical-oriented pieces included “Opus in Pastels” and “Prologue Suite,” a four-movement work for the concert hall. To showcase these works, Kenton booked the band in such prestigious non-jazz venues as Carnegie Hall, Boston’s Symphony Hall, and the Chicago Civic Opera House.

Despite these sold-out performances, many jazz critics rejected Kenton’s new direction and their reviews were often quite acerbic. After the Carnegie Hall concert, Simon wrote:

I’ve never been a Kenton band enthusiast. . . . Stan often asked me to wait. His wouldn’t be a dance band much longer. So I waited. And finally I went to a concert. I’m less of a Kenton band enthusiast than ever before! . . . Though he continues to talk on and on with unmitigated intensity and though I believe very certainly that the man is absolutely sincere, I think that his behavior at the [Carnegie Hall] concert, his own flippant, hammy attitude, plus the nonfulfillment of his promise to produce interesting, new concert music, disqualifies him and his band from any really serious consideration as concert artists.³⁸⁰

³⁷⁹ “Kenton Comes Back,” *Metronome*, 63:16, 17 N ’47, cited in Lee, 106-7.

³⁸⁰ George Simon, “Stan Kenton: A Concert to End All Concerts,” *Metronome*, April 1948.

Variety's headline reaction to the concert was "Kenton's Carnegie Hall Concert a Killer both Artistically and at the Box Office." Ulanov provides an analysis of Rugolo's "progressive" style.

Some of the time it [Kenton's progressive music] is pretentious movie music. Let me add quickly here, lest Pete [Rugolo] be twice offended, the movie music doesn't spring bar for bar from anybody's soundtrack, but those piano-mit-band effusions come right out of the long, languid line of treacle that began in the nineteenth century with the Brahms, Schumann, Chopin, and Tchaikovsky piano concertos, were given unholy impetus by Debussy and Ravel, and made totally obnoxious by movie score after movie score coupled with radio bridge after radio bridge. But these pseudo-arty extravaganzas are not all that's left after the cadaverous caterwauls which pass for jazz. There's always Rugolo. And Pete is a talented well-schooled musician. Well, what does 'e do? He writes music with moments, moments of atonality, moments of polyrhythm, moments of Latin beats, moments that make you glad, and moments which make you sad. If you like the suggestions of Stravinsky ("Impressionism") and Ravel ("Artistry in Bolero") and all of the facile facets of modern scoring which Pete includes in his manuscript, you'll like his concert music. To me it's senselessly eclectic and consequently of very little interest.³⁸¹

Despite the numerous negative reviews, the band won the *Downbeat* Readers' Poll as the "Best Big Band of 1947." Pete Rugolo, June Christy, and Shelly Manne also won individual awards in their respective divisions.

On June 12, 1948, the band drew a record 15,000 fans to a concert at the Hollywood Bowl that was broadcast on station KTSL-TV, apparently making it the first ever televised jazz concert. Notwithstanding the fact that the band continued to be the hottest box office draw in the country and won the *Downbeat* poll for the second year in a row, the grueling schedule, which included many ballrooms as well as concert halls, and Kenton's growing frustration about the polarization of his ballroom audiences, prompted him to disband again. He lamented, "It's impossible

³⁸¹ Barry Ulanov, "What's Wrong with Stan Kenton?" *Metronome*, February 1948: 33.

for us to satisfy more than half the crowd. The fans up front are mad when we play for the dancers. The dancers are griped when we play the style for which we have been fortunate enough to gain some fame.”³⁸² At a December sellout engagement at New York’s Paramount Theater, he sent a telegram to each of his musicians announcing the breakup: “I released a big story to the trades that if we couldn’t play music the way we wanted to play, we weren’t gonna play it! And I really meant it! I thought, God damn it, I’m through with this hassle with these ballrooms!”³⁸³

After considering and then rejecting a career as a psychiatrist (especially after facing the prospect of at least twelve years of fulltime college education), he began building his next-generation musical organization—a forty-three piece ensemble, complete with violins, violas, celli, French horns, tuba, a saxophone section (which could double on English horn, flute, alto flute, bass clarinet, oboe, and bassoon), five trumpets, five trombones, bass, guitar, piano, drums, and congas. The new organization would be called “The Innovations of Modern Music Orchestra.” Kenton proclaimed that the Orchestra’s music “which Americans [not Europeans!] will create will be a merger of what men are doing in both the contemporary classical field and the modernists in the jazz field.”³⁸⁴

To create the new library of arrangements and compositions for the Orchestra, Kenton built an impressive stable of composers/arrangers: Pete Rugolo, Bob Graettinger, Neal Hefti, Franklyn Marks, Johnny Richards, George Handy, Chico

³⁸² Easton, 126.

³⁸³ Ibid.

³⁸⁴ Lee, 119.

O’Farrill, Manny Albam, and George Russell. Notable players included Los Angeles Philharmonic violinist George Kast, alto saxophonist Bud Shank, trumpeter Shorty Rogers, and a nineteen-year-old Maynard Ferguson. In addition, Art Pepper and Shelly Manne returned. Most of the arrangements were experimental and elaborate, while some were Latin-influenced. George Simon described the library as “a mixture of atonal concert arrangements, sometimes reminiscent of Bartók, with works that had a tangential relationship to jazz.”³⁸⁵

With the first concert tour set to begin in February 1950, Kenton scheduled a pre-tour concert at the Los Angeles Philharmonic Auditorium. Before the concert, he warned the young audience, “If you start looking for melody, you won’t find any. . . . We got a great thing out of concocting sound. . . It’s sound concoction.”³⁸⁶ *Time’s* review of the concert was quite negative:

The first belt of sound from the brasses pinned the audience to its chairs. Lanky Stan Kenton flapped his arms like a scarecrow in a hurricane as the band blasted out a “montage” of the jazzed-up dissonances that Kentonites have slavered over since 1941. . . . Most of the time, it was a bewildering battle between the violins, violas and cellos on the one side, and the bursting brasses on the other. Kenton himself admitted that there was room for improvement. “The greatest criticism we had was for the fact that the brass section, when it spoke, it spoke so loud that the string section which it interrupted was so completely dominated that it all sounded disconnected—as if they were playing two different pieces.” . . . Earnest ever-posing Stan Kenton was set to take his turmoil on a tour of 77 U.S. and Canadian cities, beginning this week.³⁸⁷

³⁸⁵ Easton, 133.

³⁸⁶ Ibid.

³⁸⁷ “Certain Turmoil,” *Time*, February 13, 1950, cited in Easton, 133-34.

There were critics, such as Ted Hallock, who praised the Innovations in Modern Music Orchestra after the tour's opening date in Seattle.

What happened at this city's auditorium last night should happen to the country at large, and will be happening during the coming three months. At 8:30 P.M. Thursday, lanky Stan Kenton raised the curtain on a musical aggregation bound to shock, thrill and puzzle young and old for years to come. . . . Stan's orchestra revealed an intellectual intent unparalleled in the history of modern American music. . . . Sectional phrasing, intonation, attack, and "emotional projection" was beyond belief. If this sounds a bit thick, it is meant to be just that, a commendation in words much too inadequate to convey any idea of what did happen on the Seattle stage. . . . Tone color in all its true vital majesty was manifest as always in the gutty brilliant scores of longtime Kenton arranger Pete Rugolo. . . .³⁸⁸

Regardless of the tone of the Orchestra's criticism, Kenton's fans were generally turned off by the cacophonous harmonies, complicated forms, ambiguous beat, and lack of emotion. The jazz fans rejected the classical aspects, and the classical fans rejected the jazz aspects. Comedian Mort Sahl, normally one of Kenton's greatest supporters, was telling his audiences, "About that Stan Kenton band—a waiter dropped a tray and three couples got up to dance."³⁸⁹

The music of Bob Graettinger would be the most difficult for Kenton audiences and critics to understand. Even though Graettinger's scores were clearly atypical for the Orchestra, Kenton was committed to performing and promoting the music of this artistic and social outsider. In the early 1940s, Graettinger had been an alto saxophonist and arranger of dance charts for Benny Carter, Vido Musso, Alvino Rey, and Bobby Sherwood. He was drafted during the war and subsequently discharged for alcoholism, after which he gave up playing to focus solely on

³⁸⁸ Ted Hallock, "Kenton's Music 'Greatest Ever,'" *Downbeat*, March 24, 1950.

³⁸⁹ Gioia, *West Coast Jazz*, 156.

composing. With the intention of enhancing his skills, Graettinger enrolled in the Westlake School of Music, a Los Angeles institution known for being oriented towards film scoring. Easton observes that “Graettinger’s ambitions were neither classical nor commercial. To him, music was a vehicle—the only one available to him—of expression for the conflagration that raged inside him and would, before his thirty-fifth birthday, destroy him.”³⁹⁰

In 1947, Graettinger composed a work entitled “Thermopylae” which he presented to Kenton who then recorded it. His four-part tone poem, *City of Glass*, which took him over a year to write, was among the most revolutionary works in the Kenton Library. It was eventually recorded by Capitol in December 1952, and Rob Darrell’s review of the album for *Downbeat* was published the next month.

If your nerves are still raw and twitchin’ from New Year’s . . . then you’re in no fitten shape for such rackety-rax aural calisthenics as I’m prescribing today. . . . But if you’ve got tough ears and constitutions, I can promise you an adventure in new sound that you’ll never forget. . . . Actually, there’s no jazz in it but it is sure as “modern” as you can get. It’s out of Schoenbergian and Bartokian blood-lines, perhaps, but all dolled up with the latest in Graettinger and Kenton-style innovations where the frenzied but dazzling interplay of sonority is concerned. . . . It’s almost intolerably harsh and shrill in some stretches. Some of the stunts are beaten to exhaustion, a few are thrown away before they really get going, and oftentimes the use of too many effects at once tends to cancel out much of their impact. I wish Graettinger were as clever a dramatic psychologist as he is a sound pattern weaver, for his work needs more astute editing and organization. Yet, for all that, he’s got something here that’s brashly alive, and at its best, tremendously exciting.³⁹¹

Graettinger’s personal behavior was just as non-conforming as his music. His peculiar lifestyle, emaciated appearance, ragged clothing, and dark manner created an

³⁹⁰ Easton, 135.

³⁹¹ Rob Darrell, Review of “City of Glass,” *Downbeat*, January 28, 1953, cited in Easton, 143.

effect that generally turned others away. Vocalist-arranger Gene Howard observed that “Bob Graettinger was frightening! Probably the world’s first hippie. Completely and utterly a non-conformist. He wrote things that I still don’t understand, and I think that if Stan would be completely honest with himself, he doesn’t understand either!”³⁹² Art Pepper also had misgivings about Graettinger’s writing style:

Graettinger didn’t write just for a band, or for sections; he wrote for each individual person, more or less like Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn did. It was so very difficult to play, because you were independent of the guy next to you. If you got lost, you were dead, because there was no way to figure out where you were at. . . . Graettinger perceived my sound as being very mournful and very sad. Very introverted. Very unhappy. Very tragic, very lonely, very unhappy, very turbulent. And he told me this at a time when I was still young and everything was going great. And the way he described my sound is exactly the way my life went.³⁹³

Gail Madden’s relationship with Graettinger was equally bizarre. Easton describes their romantic entanglement:

From 1947 to ’49, Graettinger lived with Gail Madden, who had appropriated her last name from another saxophone player, Dave Madden, who had also lived with, but never married her. Gail was a frustrated pianist; she saw herself as the women behind the genius (whomever he might be at the moment). She *looked* even freakier than Graettinger, in mismatched shoes, men’s clothes, whatever took her fancy. She shared Graettinger’s oblique perspective on life and was one of the few people who could make him laugh. But she was volatile and erratic, if not downright psychotic; Graettinger came home one day to find everything died pink—bedspread, towels curtains, clothes, shoes, everything. Sexually, the relationship was bizarre. Gail had a reputation for being “a sexual circus,” and Graettinger was impotent; the implications can scarcely be imagined.³⁹⁴

³⁹² Easton, 136.

³⁹³ *Ibid.*, 139.

³⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 137.

After the two split up, they went their separate ways. Graettinger became involved with Lois Madden, the wife of Dave Madden, and Gail Madden took up with another composer/arranger: Gerry Mulligan.

Despite Easton's account, Mulligan not only credits Madden for saving Graettinger's life, but also expresses an admiration for him.

She was really responsible for Graettinger's survival up to that point, because he was nearly "done for" with alcohol, but when I met him [after hitchhiking across the country with Madden], he was absolutely straight. I liked him a lot, and he was in the thick of a reworked "City of Glass," and he was also writing a cello and horn concerto. As a matter of fact, I heard the original "City of Glass" when they were rehearsing it at the Paramount Theater in New York a couple of years before.³⁹⁵

By the end of 1951, The Innovations in Modern Music Orchestra collapsed under the weight of its forty-three pieces and ceased to operate. Kenton laments, "I had great hopes for the Innovations Orchestra. . . . I supported that orchestra for two years and it proved a very expensive proposition, economically impossible in fact, for at the end of 1951 I had spent over \$200,000 to have it on the road for that length of time."³⁹⁶

By January 1952, Kenton had reorganized into a nineteen-piece (five reeds, ten brass, and four rhythm) format and the new unit was deemed "New Concepts of Artistry in Rhythm Orchestra." Horricks observes that "Kenton's thickets of verbiage about 'progressive jazz' had been stripped away and he was leading a conventional big band, packed with second-generation modernists. This in turn led to his making the best LP recording of his career. 'New Concepts of Artistry in Rhythm' is in fact

³⁹⁵ Jack, 145.

³⁹⁶ Lee, 153.

the *older* concept, meaning a strong jazz propulsion.”³⁹⁷ The library of this Orchestra would be separated into three distinct categories: progressive jazz; innovations in contemporary music; and the category that would be assigned to Gerry Mulligan (much to his chagrin): popular and dance. After recording several records for Capitol, the band started touring in April to a lukewarm reception. By the 1950s, the popularity of big bands had waned, with Lawrence Welk being the only band leader whose drawing power increased over the decade. In June, Kenton signed a deal with NBC Radio to broadcast weekly concerts from wherever the band was playing. The show, promoted as “Concerts in Miniature” was touted as “The first merging of Progressive jazz with network radio.” Kenton would now have the opportunity to explain his music to the public.³⁹⁸ And on the first broadcast emanating from Kitchener, Ontario, he said:

This is an *orchestra*, a group of musicians gathered together because of a belief in a particular music. Like all orchestras, *this* orchestra is unique in that the artistic ideal is more important than the personal differences. These musicians, for this instance, came from all corners of America. The character of the music to follow is a result of their understanding and adjustment to each other. Some of this music is written. Some is improvised. There are times when the musician will express his individuality, and other moments when he will meld with the rest to create an organized sound. This is a cross-section view of this orchestra.³⁹⁹

Kenton continued to grow his stable of talented arrangers to supply the charts to meet his ever increasing demand for new music. In 1950, Rugolo invited Bill Russo, a former Lennie Tristano student who led an experimental big band in

³⁹⁷ Horricks, *Gerry Mulligan's Ark*, 30.

³⁹⁸ Easton, 156.

³⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

Chicago, to play trombone and write for the Innovations Orchestra. Over the next four years, Russo contributed over forty, mostly “progressive,” scores for Kenton. His highbrow seriousness generally represented all of the characteristics of Kenton music that the critics disdained. His compositional philosophy is aptly summed up in the liner notes of the 1954 album, *Stan Kenton: The Music of Bill Russo*: “Russo objects to the soulful, romantic approach to composition. He feels that music, like all art, should be consciously designed to express basic truths.”⁴⁰⁰ Some of Russo’s more notable charts include “Solitaire,” a classical-jazz hybrid which he had re-worked and submitted to Kenton upon Rugolo’s suggestion; “Halls of Brass,” which was composed for the brass section, without woodwinds or percussion; and “23°N, 82°W,” a Latin chart named for the coordinates of Havana, Cuba. Vosbein notes Russo’s unusual treatment of rhythm and meter in this composition. “Russo has several examples of repeated seven-beat phrases while the rhythm section continues in four. By the final climatic section he actually notates the trombones in a new time signature, seven-four, while the rest of the band continues in four-four.”⁴⁰¹ Russo also brought another ex-Tristano student into the Kenton fold: Lee Konitz.

Russo himself noted that “Most of the guys not only had trouble playing my pieces, but they didn’t like them.”⁴⁰² To the jazz-oriented players in the band like Konitz, Art Pepper, Shorty Rogers, and Zoot Sims, Russo’s music just did not swing. While Kenton respected the talents of his players and allowed them to expose their

⁴⁰⁰ Cited in Gioia, *West Coast Jazz*, 157.

⁴⁰¹ Terry Vosbein, “New Concepts of Bill Russo,” *Proceedings of International Association of Jazz Educators Conference, Long Beach, 2003*.

⁴⁰² Steven D. Harris, *The Kenton Kronicles* (Pasadena, California: Dynaflo Publications, 2000), 93.

individuality and stylistic preferences throughout their solos, the arrangements he favored were void of the rhythmic lilt of a Count Basie, Duke Ellington, or Woody Herman number. Ulanov's assessment of the Kenton-Rugolo-Russo rhythmic conception:

There is a theory, a theory that a band that screams, screeches, hollers, hoots and generally hells it up is *the end* (as we hipsters say), and it thereby gets a tremendous beat. 'T'ain't so. The Kenton band, unless my foot, my heart and ear grievously betray me, doesn't get a beat, tremendous or otherwise. There are a few leftovers from the first or *anticipation* edition of the band which manage something of a one-two syncopation that approximates a beat, as everyone falls over himself to make the weak beats the most timid ever and the strong ones as virile as Ernest Hemingway crossed with Victor Mature. The rest moves as stiffly as C. Aubrey Smith⁴⁰³ on a rainy afternoon . . . the band doesn't swing, jump or whatever verb satisfies your conception of a jazz beat.⁴⁰⁴

As a consequence, Kenton was faced with some of his most talented players' dissatisfaction and frustration, which would sometimes be expressed subtly, and sometimes overtly. So, Kenton struck a compromise and began buying charts from two swinging arrangers: Bill Holman and Gerry Mulligan.

Holman, the antithesis of Russo and probably the most traditional of all Kenton arrangers, described his principles in jazz writing as: "continuity and flow, combined with swing and vitality, with a fairly traditional base."⁴⁰⁵ Holman's additions to the band's repertoire in 1950 allowed Kenton to show his audiences and critics that yes, this band could swing. Holman told Carol Easton,

⁴⁰³ C. Aubrey Smith (1863-1948) was a British actor known for his roles as a stereotypical Englishman with a stern determination and stiff upper lip.

⁴⁰⁴ Ulanov, "What's Wrong with Stan Kenton?," 32.

⁴⁰⁵ Bill Holman, quoted in Les Tompkins, "Big Band Arranger Par Excellence Bill Holman," *Crescendo International*, February 1987: 6.

I felt that his [Kenton's] music had been predicated on exaggeration. I think music should be a little more homey, a little more human, a little warmer than his had been. I felt that the band should swing. Which would normally put me in the Woody Herman end of it, or Count Basie. But I was in Stan's band! There's always been a lot of weight there, and if you can get that amount of weight to approach swinging, you've got a formidable product. . . . When I was trying to push swing music on him, he was already into Afro-Cuban things. There's a rhythmic element in those that's like a lot of the rock music going on now; so in a way, you could say he was fifteen years ahead of his time. But to me, if he was going to have a jazz band, he wasn't fifteen years ahead of his time—he was just plain wrong! . . . The band was so unwieldy; I used to try to write things that would make it sound smaller. . . . He always wanted titles like "Artistry in Cosmic Radiation."⁴⁰⁶

Holman was born in Olive, California, in the same year as Mulligan (1927).

He took up the saxophone as a youth, and, like Graettinger, studied music at Westlake, where he learned the basics of writing for a big band. After an apprenticeship with the Charlie Barnet band, he was referred by Gene Roland to Kenton. He initially joined the band as a saxophonist with the promise that he would also do some writing. Kenton eventually had him writing fulltime.

Holman was influenced by Mulligan's work for Kenton, and he would later say, "I knew I wanted to do something different from what it [Kenton's band] had been doing previously, but I knew that Stan was not interested in Basie types of charts. But the things Gerry Mulligan had done with the band gave me a glimmer of light of what could be done with the band."⁴⁰⁷ For Holman, Mulligan's work demonstrated an imaginative approach of integrating the swing era idiom into music that sounded modern—the best of both worlds. Mulligan believed that it was his

⁴⁰⁶ Easton, 159-60.

⁴⁰⁷ Gioia, *West Coast Jazz*, 159.

treatment of counterpoint that Holman favored. “Bill [Holman] was saying that was why he was taken with the first arrangements that I brought into Kenton’s band, because Bill said he had already been leaning in that direction, trying to open up the contrapuntal way of approaching it. So, when I brought my things in, he said he really liked what I had done because I had achieved that in these charts.”⁴⁰⁸ Their admiration for each other was mutual, for in 1960, Mulligan would hire Holman to be the chief writer for his Concert Jazz Band.

Players, such as Lee Konitz, were also attracted to Mulligan’s style of writing. Konitz remembers:

He [Kenton] told me he was interested in starting a “jazz band,” in quotes, and he was hiring jazz people. There were some good writers—Bill Holman, Gerry Mulligan. Gerry had a player’s feeling for writing, especially for saxophone players, and in that band, it was welcome. You could finally feel your weight as a saxophone player. It was very difficult for a saxophone player to play in that band, with ten brass.⁴⁰⁹

These positive attitudes towards Mulligan within the band did nothing to endear him with Kenton. As with Holman, Mulligan represented a compromise between Kenton and his players to allow them to play music they liked, and between Kenton and his audiences who had had enough of the experimental iterations of the various Kenton orchestras. Mulligan remembers:

We knew that we were approaching music from totally different places, and I always tried to do my best when I wrote for the band, to do things that would please Stan. It wasn’t easy for me to do because it was a different approach and he really didn’t like my arrangements. Stan kind of got stuck with me because this band that he started out was going to be a musician’s band, a swing band. . . . I brought in one

⁴⁰⁸ Mulligan, oral history.

⁴⁰⁹ Easton, 154.

chart and the guys in the band loved it and Stan, you could see was very uncomfortable with it, but because the musicians liked me, he felt obliged to – he didn't want to lose face by not buying from me”⁴¹⁰

Easton observes that despite the fact that Mulligan's skills lent themselves well to Kenton's needs, his uncompromising demeanor led to a very stormy relationship.

No band, no rehearsal hall, no concert stage was ever large enough to contain the combined egos of Stan Kenton and Gerry Mulligan. Perhaps because of his drug habit, which he has since overcome, Mulligan was arrogant, rude, abrasive and rebellious. He frequently made it clear to anybody within earshot that he didn't give a shit about Stan Kenton's music, that he had more musical expertise in his little finger . . . and so on, ad nauseam. He insisted on overrehearsing the band, as though his charts were their sole concern. Stan loved the way he wrote—“Swing House” was one of the band's most popular numbers—but, “If I had let the orchestra play Mulligan's music exactly the way he wanted to play it, it wouldn't have had a Kenton sound at all.” For his part, Mulligan remembers that Kenton would “tell his drums to play so loud they sounded like they were part of a whole separate band!”⁴¹¹

More recently, Mulligan has downplayed this negative view of his relationship with Kenton.

I realized that they [the band members] thought I didn't like Stan and that Stan and I always appeared to be fighting to them. That really wasn't the case at all. We had kind of an antagonistic relationship to each other. He loved to put me on, so I'd put him on back. I couldn't keep my mouth shut. And as a consequence we had this kind of bantering relationship which I think kind of tickled him because most musicians tended to be a little sycophantic around somebody like Stan, and he wasn't used to people saying what they thought around him, necessarily. But he would put me in that position because he would say things to me in front of other people, so I would say things, in the same vein, back again. So, we always had kind of a strange relationship like that, but at the bottom of it, even though I wasn't, by any means, his favorite arranger, and he didn't like the idea that my

⁴¹⁰ Mulligan, oral history.

⁴¹¹ Easton, 158-59.

approach was horizontal [emphasis on melody] rather than vertical [emphasis on texture], he respected me and he liked me. And I respected him and I liked him. As I learned different things about him, I learned how to incorporate him into my charts.⁴¹²

Mulligan did not appreciate the fact that when Kenton delegated writing assignments, Mulligan was left with a role that was an obvious blow to his ego. He recalls,

He made it clear though that I was writing the *dance* arrangements, and he was leaving the concert work to Russo and Holman and Graettinger and Johnny Richards, you know, all big, big sounding charts here and let the little stuff go to the kid. . . . I was glad to have the job writing for Stan and it was a big help to me in a lot of ways. It still was kind of a pain in the neck to be relegated to writing just the dance charts, and I looked down on it as not being particularly important and certainly not in Stan's scheme of things.⁴¹³

The charts that Mulligan wrote for Kenton, such as "Young Blood," "Swing House," "Walkin' Shoes," and "Limelight," represented a fresh approach to swinging big band music. Mulligan incorporated innovative techniques in his arrangements that would later become signature sounds of the various ensembles he would lead in the 1950s. He softens the overbearing brassy sound with a new saxophone-oriented approach. He has a natural way of treating counterpoint with each line presented in unison by individual ensemble sections, a technique that was inspired by jazz from a much earlier era.

There was kind of a general movement to do more obvious things with counterpoint. The contrapuntal idea had always been there. It existed in the early days especially with New Orleans music with each one of the lines, and each one of the instruments having their own function in the ensemble so that they're playing their own lines and that's

⁴¹² Mulligan, oral history.

⁴¹³ Ibid.

counterpoint. So, it was merely another application of the functions of the instruments.⁴¹⁴

Mulligan also creates a modern effect with such innovations as irregular phrasing and juxtaposed rhythms, techniques that he had utilized for his Davis Nonet scores.

“Young Blood” was a title that Kenton came up with and assigned to Mulligan.

[After all these dance arrangements], he finally gave me a title that he wanted done called “Young Blood.” . . . You know, Gail and I had a little apartment close to Hollywood Blvd. with a big walk-in closet, and I had this little 66-key piano, a little studio upright. I wheeled it into the closet and stayed there for three days while I wrote, just stayed there. It was the only arrangement I ever wrote in anger. . . . I drew on that arrangement of “Yardbird Suite” [that had several years earlier been rejected by Woody Herman] because I think probably what I wrote in the out chorus was similar. And I think that the anger that I was expressing was the thing that had built up [because I was relegated to just writing dance charts].

“Young Blood” turned out to be a great work, and is the Kenton chart for which Mulligan is most identified. Giddins observes that it “incorporates a reverse of the changes [chord progression] that [Charlie] Parker used for ‘Scrapple from the Apple’ (Mulligan’s A section is loosely based on ‘I Got Rhythm,’ his bridge on ‘Honeysuckle Rose’) and is an exercise in counterpoint, asymmetrical phrasing, and superimposed meters.”⁴¹⁵ Mulligan’s linear style of composition is demonstrated with a flowing saxophone section line that opens the piece and serves as somewhat of a fugal subject from which the material that follows spins out (Figure 11).

⁴¹⁴ Ibid.

⁴¹⁵ Giddins, 357.

The image shows a musical score for saxophones and trombones. The top section contains five staves for saxophones: A.Sx.1, A.Sx.2, T.Sx.1, T.Sx.2, and B.Sx. The bottom section contains five staves for trombones: Trb.1, Trb.2, Trb.3, Trb.4, and B.Trb.5. The score is for measure 10, which is highlighted with a box around the measure number '10'. The music is in 4/4 time and features a complex rhythmic pattern with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes. The saxophone parts are more melodic and rhythmic, while the trombone parts are more harmonic and provide a solid foundation. The score is written in a standard musical notation with clefs, key signatures, and dynamic markings.

Figure 11: Saxophone and trombone lines at m. 10 of “Young Blood”

Mulligan always felt that Kenton played the chart too fast.

I played it last summer [1994] with Bob Brookmeyer’s project in Germany. And I said to Bob, “You know, this thing has always really been played too fast. Could we try playing it one time at the tempo that I really intended it to be?” He said that he’d like to try that. And it became a different piece. It was really a swinging piece and not loaded with hostility at all. And it’s a very friendly, user-friendly composition that actually was about ten times easier to play at the slower tempo because everything swung and fit into place, and the brass at the out-chorus wasn’t trying to gulp big breaths, you know the breathing was much more natural. And it was kind of an eye-opening experience—

funny though, I thought I was getting all of my hostilities out [when I wrote it] and what came out of it wasn't hostile at all.⁴¹⁶

Mulligan recalls the circumstances surrounding his writing of "Walkin' Shoes."

I remember the first thing that I wrote for him was very contrapuntal. I was trying to do a thing that built an ensemble sound out of unison contrapuntal lines and built up to a nice ensemble chorus. Stan didn't really like it, so he said if I rewrote it, he would take it. So I did. I took it and put the tune "Walkin' Shoes" on the first part, and used the out chorus from the piece that was there [and had been rejected], and that was all right.⁴¹⁷

While "Walkin' Shoes" is not nearly as contrapuntal as "Young Blood," its simple, lean, and flowing melody presented with such a relaxed feel is the essence of the Mulligan sound. When Kenton introduced the number to his audiences, he referred to "Walkin' Shoes" as "a light, happy, rhythmic tune." Perhaps its only drawback is that it is more suited for a smaller ensemble such as the Davis Nonet or the groups Mulligan would lead later on. The theme is stated by subdued unison brass accompanied by harmonizing saxophones which present the interesting chord progression. Mulligan creates an effective platform to allow the soloists to play expressively and take advantage of their instruments' natural sound rather than to overblow such as was required for many other of the Kenton charts. The dynamic shout chorus, which effectively closes the number, is a section of an arrangement that Kenton originally rejected.

"Swing House" is another one of Mulligan's Kenton charts that integrates counterpoint and dissonance in a distinctive way. The swinging melody, presented by

⁴¹⁶ Mulligan, oral history.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid.

unison saxophones is initially accompanied by the trombones playing a descending line of unison quarter notes on beats one and three. This simple background morphs into an elaborate countermelody, which is presented by the trumpets in a higher register. The sense of swing that the Mulligan chart provides is a refreshing change from the hulking Kenton approach. “Limelight” is somewhat reminiscent of Mulligan’s jump style charts that he wrote for Gene Krupa six years early. The tune opens with the trumpets playing the main theme in three against the band’s accompaniment in four. The ensemble eventually settles into a swinging groove accompanied by quick fills provided by the drummer, whose solo brings the chart to a dynamic conclusion. Mulligan also wrote arrangements of standards for Kenton. These include “Too Marvelous for Words” and “All the Things You Are,” presented as a slow trumpet-featuring ballad reminiscent of the Claude Thornhill style. Perhaps as a consequence of being an autodidact, Mulligan was generally more interested in building upon his past practices than in creating entirely new approaches.

Mulligan’s professional relationship with Kenton was strictly as a freelance writer, and he had neither the opportunity nor the ambition to play with the band.

I had no desire to play with that band because playing in the band didn’t seem to me to be fun. The bands that I played with, I enjoyed playing with. Also, the saxophone had evolved into a position in that band of unimportance. As time went on, the sax section became less and less important. I would have been really playing tuba⁴¹⁸ all the time.⁴¹⁹

⁴¹⁸ Mulligan’s euphemism (exaggerated in this instance) for the baritone saxophone’s relegated role of playing parts composed mostly of tonic and dominant pitches on beats one and three.

⁴¹⁹ Mulligan, oral history.

It is doubtful whether Mulligan even had the opportunity to play baritone sax for Kenton since Bob Gioga, Kenton's old and loyal friend, had occupied the baritone chair since 1941. Gioga retired on account of ill health in early 1953 (after Mulligan's association with Kenton ended), and was replaced by Henry (Hank) Levy.⁴²⁰ After only six months, Levy had to leave the band to help with his family business in Baltimore. Levy, later a composer/arranger known for his unorthodox time signatures, sold numerous charts to Kenton as well as to Don Ellis in the 1970s. Levy remembers that "He [Kenton] was very impressed with the exotic meter concept, and I always wrote in the Kenton style anyway."⁴²¹

In the summer of 1952, The New Concepts in Artistry and Rhythm Orchestra joined with Nat Cole and Sarah Vaughn for an eight-week tour of the midwestern and eastern states. Since Mulligan did not tour with the Kenton organization, he continued working on other projects he had started since arriving in Los Angeles. "While the [Kenton] band was organizing in California, I was around them a lot. Then when they took off, I had to find other things to do. . . . So, I started playing more."⁴²²

⁴²⁰ Lee, 168.

⁴²¹ Ibid., 266.

⁴²² Mulligan, oral history.

Part III: Leader

Lighthouse Sessions

When Gerry and Gail first arrived in L.A., they were both enthusiastically reading *The Fountainhead* by Ayn Rand, which tells the story of an idealistic architect clashing with big business. It had been released as a film with Gary Cooper and Patricia Neal, and they really saw themselves in those roles!”⁴²³

[Trumpeter/composer and former Kenton sideman] Shorty [Rogers] was one of the few people in Los Angeles who was really helpful to me at that point. He’d try to get me on record dates, and he’d try to get me on gigs, and if he was doing something with his little band, he would take me along. So, I wound up down at the Lighthouse in Hermosa Beach. John Levine, who was the owner of the place, was very helpful because he tried to straighten the thing out with the union and got permission for me to play and got the wheels in motion to straighten all of that out [Mulligan’s dismissal due to non-payment of dues] and get me reinstated.⁴²⁴

The Lighthouse, which would become the center of activity for a group of musicians who helped fuel the popularity of West Coast jazz, was originally a restaurant/lounge that catered to merchant seamen, until it was purchased by businessman John Levine in 1948. As Levine was attempting to make his new venture a success, he was approached by bassist Howard Rumsey, who convinced him to feature live jazz jam sessions.

Rumsey had been the bassist in Stan Kenton’s earliest band, the one that debuted at the Rendezvous Ballroom on May 30, 1941. His departure from the Kenton organization occurred rapidly when, in September 1942, Kenton literally threw him off the bandstand of the Summit Ballroom in Baltimore. Apparently, Rumsey had disagreed with drummer Pee Wee George’s conception of the beat and

⁴²³ Bob Whitlock, Quoted in Jack, 155.

⁴²⁴ Mulligan, oral history.

had put taps on his shoes and a piece of plywood under his feet to drown out George's timekeeping. After demanding unsuccessfully that he stop tapping, Kenton grabbed Rumsey's music, threw it under the piano, picked the bass player up by his belt and the back of his collar, and hurled him off the stage.⁴²⁵ After leaving Kenton, Rumsey worked for several big-name bandleaders, including Charlie Barnet and Barney Bigard, until he decided to abandon doing road trips and settle down in Southern California.

The Lighthouse jam sessions began as a trial on Sundays only, with Rumsey playing records during the week. He recalls the first Sunday jam session:

I put together a fine combo, opened the front door—there was no p.a. system, but we kept the music loud enough to roar out into the street—and within an hour Levine had more people in the room than he'd seen in a month. That was Sunday afternoon, May 29, 1949. It was a classic case of all the elements converging: the right place for the right time for the right people.⁴²⁶

With the success of Rumsey's Sunday experiment, Levine gradually expanded his commitment to live jazz until it became a regular affair on weeknights, with an all-day musical marathon on Sundays. Despite the composing and arranging experience brought to the Lighthouse by musicians such as Bill Holman, Jimmy Giuffre, Shorty Rogers, and Mulligan, these daily performances were primarily free-form jam sessions. Gioia describes the energy that was generated at these legendary sessions:

These were spirited blowing dates with no holds barred, as rambunctious and unpredictable as the turbulent surf waves outside the door. . . . An early private recording of a Lighthouse session featuring

⁴²⁵ Easton, 79.

⁴²⁶ Leonard Feather, *The Passion for Jazz* (New York: Horizon Press, 1980), 168.

Shorty Rogers and Art Pepper (later released on the Xanadu label) reveals an even more free-wheeling ensemble. In fact, the music recorded here might seem to be completely at odds with the personnel. Supported by a rhythm section consisting of Rumsey, [pianist Frank] Patchen, and [drummer Shelly] Manne, Pepper and Rogers led a veritable West Coast all-star band. But the music taken down by Bob Andrews's portable Pentron recorder is New York bebop plain and simple. Tearing through "Scrapple from the Apple," "Cherokee," "TinTin Deo," and other East Coast standards, the front line was driving hard—and clearly under the influence of Bird and Dizzy.⁴²⁷

Rumsey remembers that the first group known as the Lighthouse All-Stars included musicians who had made their name on Central Avenue (L.A.'s early bebop scene), such as Teddy Edwards (tenor saxophone), Sonny Criss (alto saxophone), and Hampton Hawes (piano). Frank Patchen (piano), Bobby White (drums), and Keith Williams (trumpet) were also early regulars. Shorty Rogers joined the Lighthouse All-Stars full-time in 1951, after Rumsey had asked him to play a New Year's Eve performance during his Christmas break from the Kenton band. Rogers told Shipton that his experience at the club was typical of many of the players who worked there:

It was my opportunity to stay in Los Angeles, live at home with my family, and get off the road. There was so little work going in Los Angeles, I couldn't really make it there, but the club gave me a steady job playing every night. . . . As time goes on it becomes more apparent to me how valid the music was, because the whole bunch of guys down there working included Shelly Manne, [trombonist] Milt Bernhardt, Art Pepper, and Hampton Hawes. . . . On Sundays, which became the big marathon all-day session there, from two in the afternoon until two in the morning . . . people would hear the music and come in off the beach around 2:15 in their bathing suits . . . There'd [also] be people in dress suits, people from Hollywood . . . The mixture was wonderful and the one thing they all had in common was an enjoyment of jazz.⁴²⁸

⁴²⁷ Gioia, *West Coast Jazz*, 200.

⁴²⁸ Shipton, 709.

Alto saxophonist Bud Shank was particularly enamored of his Lighthouse experience and its influence on the participants. He recalls, “It was a place of learning, of experiment, of creativity, of study, and amongst all the funny and crazy things that went on, it offered a structure, a framework for creativity that will probably never be equaled again.”⁴²⁹

Rogers believed that the fact that the group of musicians who played at the Lighthouse remained relatively constant was one of the reasons the experience was special. For example, whichever of the regular pianists (Patchen, Hawes, Pete Jolly, or Marty Paich) was on that night, the “flavor” of the band remained unchanged. The weekly marathon jam sessions developed exceptional rapport among its participants, particularly between the regulars and guest performers. Rogers told Shipton that the most memorable guest contributors were Maynard Ferguson and Gerry Mulligan.⁴³⁰

Mulligan had earlier worked with Rogers at the 5-4 Ballroom at 54th and Broadway in New York. Rogers had been in New York because of an assignment Kenton had given him.

We [the Kenton band] were on the road, doing concerts, and Stan came up to me and said that at the end of the tour, they were going to record an album, and he wanted some things written that would just be named after the soloists who would be featured on each tune. He gave me one to write for Maynard Ferguson and one for Art Pepper. They would be solo pieces presenting each respective soloist. To make it more comfortable, Stan had me take off from playing the band. He left me in New York and said, “Just take as much time as you want and write it and when you get done, get in touch with us and rejoin the band.”⁴³¹

⁴²⁹ Ibid., 710.

⁴³⁰ Ibid.

⁴³¹ Lee, 127.

Gail Madden was a photographer at the 5-4 Ballroom where Rogers was performing, and when Mulligan came to pick her up each night, he would sit in with the band.⁴³²

Mulligan's positive relationship with the trumpeter grew and later resulted in his recording in various Rogers projects including *Blues for Brando* (Giants 53389 1951-3) and *Boots Brown Blockbusters* (RCA Victor EPA 641 1953).

Mulligan fully participated in the weekend marathon sessions at the Lighthouse. He recalls:

I spent a lot of time going to sessions and looking for playing jobs. And there were quite a few things going on in town, so it was interesting. . . . Howard Rumsey was great because he had me down there [at the Lighthouse] for the weekends. . . . My main job then turned out to be weekends at the Lighthouse. I played on Saturdays and Sundays starting at three o'clock in the afternoon on Saturday and played until three o'clock in the morning [on Sunday]. Then we were there again on Sunday afternoon and were there until three o'clock in the morning [on Monday]. And as the days progressed of course, and more and more people came in, it would get wilder and wilder. I swear, sometimes in that place, by the time midnight rolled around, it was like playing in a high school gymnasium with a championship basketball game going on. I mean just incredible chaos. . . . We'd start out in the afternoon with the rhythm section—Howard [Rumsey on bass] and usually Shelly [Manne on drums]. Frank Patchen was the piano player. . . . It would start out as just me and the rhythm section. Then as the evening progressed, more guys would come in, so it would be like four or five horns by nine o'clock at night. We'd play through until three in the morning with the bigger band. I hadn't done that much steady playing, so it was good for all the things that can do. . . . Frank [Patchen] and I became good friends; he was great. He used to pick me up in Hollywood where I was staying, we'd drive down there together, and we'd play through the two 12-hour segments. We were playing 24 hours out of 48! I did that for quite a number of months, and it just really got to me. Eventually I said, "Frank, I can't do this anymore. I think I'm going crazy," and so that just became more than I could deal with, but I did it for quite awhile.⁴³³

⁴³² Jack, 137.

⁴³³ Mulligan, oral history.

Through these experiences, Mulligan witnessed a turning point that brought about a new sound in 1950s West Coast jazz—a sound that would replace the 1940s Parker-influenced one of Central Avenue. This transition was evident at the Lighthouse as many of the members of the house band began writing prolifically. Giuffre, Patchen, and Rogers studied composition with Dr. Wesley La Violette, former head of the theoretical division of the Depaul University School of Music who was teaching at the Los Angeles Conservatory.⁴³⁴ Rogers remembers this burst of creativity: “There was an influx of new material coming in like an avalanche. It never quit. . . . [It was a] fun thing; to be able to write something and think, ‘Hey! We can go to work tonight and hear it!’”⁴³⁵ The basis of their study was counterpoint. Rogers recalls, “We looked at the old masters: Bach, Beethoven, Mozart. Some of the things we wrote had a baroque flavor, but once that part ended, we just went into a lot of blowing!”⁴³⁶ A library of music with a distinctive character evolved from the creative minds of the Lighthouse sidemen. New music would be brought into the club, and the men would rehearse it on the job in front of a live audience. The March 11, 1953, issue of *Downbeat* includes a photo caption that mentions that Giuffre and Rogers each wrote one new composition a week for the

⁴³⁴ He was also a lecturer on philosophy, religion and the arts. La Violette wrote several books including *Music and its Makers* (Chicago, 1938) and *The Crown of Wisdom* (Los Angeles, 1949), a study of mysticism which was nominated for the Nobel Prize for Literature.

⁴³⁵ Shipton, 711.

⁴³⁶ *Ibid.*

band.⁴³⁷ In a 1955 interview, Giuffre reported that he was still learning from La Violette.

I've studied for seven years, and I'm still with Dr. Wesley La Violette. With him, I study and attempt to absorb and use, at my own discretion, the homophonic forms, the larger forms, and the myriads of small details concerning composition. And also, as time permits, I listen to and analyze all types of music from Bach to Bob Brookmeyer, the jazz trombonist and writer.⁴³⁸

Rogers's first album as a leader, *Modern Sounds* (Mosaic MR6-125 1951), was recorded by an octet comprised of Rogers (trumpet), Pepper (alto sax), Giuffre (tenor sax), Hawes (piano), Manne (drums), Don Bagley (bass), John Graas (French horn), and Gene Englund (tuba). The album's inclusion of French horn and tuba has prompted numerous jazz critics to attempt to draw parallels between it and *The Birth of the Cool*. Max Harrison refutes these comparisons as baseless and unnecessarily harsh.

The *idiots savant* of jazz commentary . . . unanimously seized on the presence of French horn and tuba as proof of an incapable bowdlerization of the Davis items. . . . Thus "Shorty Rogers tried to copy the arrangements and 'west coast jazz' was born with Miles as a reluctant midwife." This same refusal actually to listen to the related music is echoed in countless texts, but Rogers produced nothing sounding remotely like Evans' "Moon Dreams," Carisi's "Israel," etc. Rogers's scores are less dense in texture and much less dark in mood and sound. . . . Both his [Rogers's] 1951 recordings and those of Davis from 1949-50 were alike in one respect, however. This was that each body of music represented a constructive reaction against the thin, often unison, ensembles of bop and the Tristano school. . . . Each score recorded by Davis and by Rogers had a distinct character of its own, and although the latter's output was so widely condemned

⁴³⁷ Gioia, *West Coast Jazz*, 201.

⁴³⁸ Nat Shapiro and Nat Hentoff, "A Quiet beat in California," *High Fidelity*, 5:43 (April 1955): 42-3.

in the jazz press, it is amusing how straight-ahead even the earliest items now sound.⁴³⁹

Mulligan had first gotten interested in classical music as a teenager while working for Krupa.

The thing that really got me started listening to specific composers and trying to understand what they were doing was Gene Krupa. Gene used to carry a phonograph on the road and records, and he used to enjoy having some of the musicians hang out with him in his hotel room and he'd play stuff for us. And he'd have such enthusiasm when listening to the music. He'd say, "Now, listen to this! Listen to what the trumpets do. Listen to the timpani."⁴⁴⁰

As he attests in a 1963 interview, Mulligan was not as convinced of the benefits of classical composition devices in jazz writing as were his Lighthouse peers.

I saw the direction we were all going—getting involved in classical techniques. I find it difficult to concern myself with watered-down versions of what classical composers did fifty years ago. From time to time you hear in classical music an idea you can make use of. But just to start using it, to throw it into the music is no good. You must go through a period of initiation with it, then figure out how to use it.⁴⁴¹

Despite his reservations, he did submit himself to the influence of Paul Hindemith, taking exactly what he wanted from the composer.

When I was writing for Gene Krupa and other big bands in the 1940s, I became involved with the problem of naming some of the chords I was writing. And then I came across the Hindemith technical books, but not all of which I had the equipment to understand. He was criticizing the formal theories of harmony. They make up rules of harmony that are so loaded with exceptions, that the rules don't mean anything. Traditional harmony says that a fourth isn't a chord. And that's ridiculous. It is. Hindemith showed that going up the overtone series you cover everything. I was delighted to see this. I voiced chords in fourths—chords for which there was no name, but which

⁴³⁹ Max Harrison, Eric Thacker, and Stuart Nicholson Harrison, *The Essential Jazz Records: Modernism to Postmodernism* (London: Mansell, 2000), 353.

⁴⁴⁰ Mulligan, oral history.

⁴⁴¹ Gene Lees, "Gerry Mulligan: A Writer's Credo," *Downbeat*, Jan. 17, 1963: 21.

implied the sound of some chord for which there was a name. A-D-G-C sounds like a C-chord, but it's not. A C-chord is E-G-C. Through that period, when I was reading the Hindemith books, I learned the lack of importance of naming chords.⁴⁴²

Even though Mulligan's contribution to the Lighthouse all-stars was strictly as a player, he observed the evolution of West Coast jazz as represented in the works of his associates. These influences would be manifest in his compositional output that would shortly follow.

⁴⁴² Ibid.

Pianoless Quartet with Chet Baker

I'm not sure when I met Dick Bock. I guess I knew about him because he had put together some dates for Discovery Records, but it turned out he was booking the room at the Haig. On the off nights he would bring in guys to play on the night that the main attraction wasn't playing. So, he started me playing there on Monday nights. When I first played there, it would always be with Donn Trenner [piano] in the rhythm section and the main attraction [on the other nights] was Erroll Garner.⁴⁴³

A coincidental set of circumstances soon put Mulligan in the right place (a club called the Haig on Wilshire Boulevard) at the right time with the right people, and, as a result, he would gain national fame within a year. Other than the Lighthouse, the Haig was one of a very few venues in the Los Angeles area that featured live modern jazz. French horn player John Graas lamented that "It [L.A.] was all Dixieland territory then. The club owners in Hollywood and Los Angeles wouldn't hear anything but Dixieland."⁴⁴⁴ The Haig was small and looked like an improbable place to feature modern jazz and to launch a major jazz career. It was a converted bungalow surrounded by a picket fence, assorted shrubbery, and palm trees. If it wasn't for the sign out front that read, "The Haig Dinner Cocktails," it could have easily been mistaken for a residence rather than a nightclub. Its location, however, was premium. The Brown Derby, a restaurant celebrated for its frequent patronization by movie stars, was just down the street, and the luxurious Ambassador Hotel, home of the pricey Cocoanut Grove Nightclub, was across the street. Despite the fact that the Haig's capacity was only eighty-five, its owner, John Bennett, was successful in building its reputation as one the better places to hear live jazz. Not

⁴⁴³ Mulligan, oral history.

⁴⁴⁴ Shipton, 705.

only did renowned artists such as Erroll Garner and Red Norvo play there, but the Haig, like the Lighthouse, became a launch pad for rising West Coast jazz talent. Gioia cites a list of prominent jazz acts that debuted at the Haig that reads almost like “a Who’s Who of West Coast jazz in the mid-1950s.” In addition to the Mulligan-Baker quartet, it includes Shorty Rogers and his Giants, the Laurindo Almeida/Bud Shank Quartet, the Hampton Hawes Trio with Red Mitchell, and the Bud Shank Quartet with Bud Williamson.⁴⁴⁵

At some point in 1952, Mulligan met Richard Bock, the person who would be instrumental in launching Mulligan’s rise over the next year. According to Bock, Mulligan also worked with a rotating group of musicians on the Haig off nights that included, at one time or another, Ernie Royal, trumpet; Jimmy Rowles, or Fred Otis, piano; Joe Comfort, Red Mitchell, or Joe Mondragon, bass; and Alvin Stoller or Chico Hamilton, drums.⁴⁴⁶

Bock joined Discovery Records in 1947 after he had dropped out of the City College of Los Angeles, where he had been studying English literature, philosophy, psychology, and anthropology.⁴⁴⁷ While with Discovery, Bock recorded Dizzy Gillespie, Red Norvo, and others. Despite critical acclaim, these recordings did not sell very well, so Bock returned to college in 1950 and took a part-time job as the Haig’s press agent. One of his responsibilities was to produce special programs on the off night. Bock knew and admired Mulligan’s work, both as a writer and as a

⁴⁴⁵ Gioia, *West Coast Jazz*, 172.

⁴⁴⁶ Richard Bock, Liner notes to *Genius of Gerry Mulligan*, Pacific Jazz 8, 1960.

⁴⁴⁷ Nat Hentoff, “Profiles, ‘In the Mainstream: Gerry Mulligan – II,’” *The New Yorker*, March 28, 1959: 52.

player. After they got to know each other, he became equally impressed with Mulligan's intelligence and determination.⁴⁴⁸ As a result, Bock eventually changed the off-night format at the Haig from jam session to music provided by a Mulligan-led band.

With the money he earned from his Kenton scores, Mulligan rented a rehearsal studio and began recruiting musicians for a new band that Mulligan would lead at the Haig, as well as at other venues. Madden personally recruited bassist Bob Whitlock and drummer Chico Hamilton, two of the charter members of the future pianoless quartet that would soon debut at the Haig. Whitlock remembers, "Gail telephoned, asking if I would be interested in coming to an audition with Gerry Mulligan. The audition was successful and I was offered the job playing Monday nights with him at the Haig, opposite Erroll Garner."⁴⁴⁹ Hamilton, who had been working for Lena Horne since 1947, was on leave from the singer, when Madden heard him performing with Charlie Barnet at the Streets of Paris. Mulligan's band that performed Monday nights at the Haig also included Sonny Criss (alto saxophone), Ernie Royal (trumpet), Dave Pell (tenor saxophone), Howard Roberts (guitar), Art Pepper, and others.⁴⁵⁰ Whitlock recalls that when "Gerry needed a new trumpeter, I persuaded him to consider Chet [Baker], assuring him that he would be perfect for the group, as he was one of the best trumpet players on the West Coast." Baker's audition in May 1952 ended abruptly when he stormed out after Mulligan lambasted

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁹ Jack, 155.

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid., 156.

him for warming up at extreme decibel levels. According to Whitlock, Mulligan screamed, “Don’t ever do that around me again! Chet angrily put his horn away and told Gerry in no uncertain terms where to go and what to do when he got there.”⁴⁵¹

They eventually reconciled. Years later, Baker recalls to Bob Rosenblum how difficult it was for him to get along with Mulligan.

The thing that gets on people’s nerves, and he was quite guilty of that at the time, was letting people know how wonderful he was. I’ve known other cats like that who are really quite good at the things they do, but are quite good at letting people know that they know. People don’t like to have you cram it down their throat all the time. He wasn’t called Jeru for nothing—which means sort of like Jesus. He was really messed up with drugs too at the time. He’s mellowed out quite a bit lately. But Gerry said things that could hurt you, and he didn’t have much regard for people’s feelings. He was a wise man and a great teacher with all his disciples down on their knees, and it kind of went to his head.⁴⁵²

Despite Madden’s tendency to try to dominate the rehearsals, Whitlock admired her. He says, “How could a bass player fail to appreciate her obsession with transparency, buoyancy, precision, and balance within the group? . . . I thought she was great, and I give her five stars! . . . Despite some moments that had to be uncomfortable and deeply embarrassing for him, I think [Mulligan] held her in high regard and valued her in many important ways.”⁴⁵³ Madden’s involvement with the band lasted until she and Mulligan broke up.

Gail and I split. I mean, she really figured it was time for me to get off on my own and she was trying to get herself back together because her life pretty much fell apart when she lost all of that stuff that she’d been building in New York. She had spent a lot of time and effort with me,

⁴⁵¹ Ibid.

⁴⁵² Bob Rosenblum, “Chet Baker (interview),” *Coda*, Sept./Oct. 1977: 6-7.

⁴⁵³ Jack, 156-7.

so she wanted to move on. So, that left me by myself in Los Angeles.⁴⁵⁴

Unfortunately, the couple's breakup sent Mulligan back into depression and drug dependency.

After Gail and I split up, I started to get back into the bad old habits with heroine. Not ever to the extent that I had been involved in New York, but still enough that it was an ongoing thing and it was time consuming and constant. So, I started to look for some kind of medical help, which was very hard to come by. If you have a problem, then you always are on the lookout for somebody with a cure. You constantly hear about cures for drug addiction or alcohol addiction or whatever, but of course they seldom worked. . . . I went to a number of doctors in Los Angeles and always got the same answer. It was kind of amazing. If I stopped using for six months then they would consider taking me on as a patient. So, it was a stalemate.⁴⁵⁵

His search for help would last through his entire stay in Los Angeles.

In the mean time, Bock organized a series of recording sessions at engineer Phil Turetsky's house in Laurel Canyon for a quartet comprised of Mulligan, Jimmy Rowles (piano), Red Mitchell (bass), and Chico Hamilton (drums). Turetsky's recording technology consisted of an Ampex tape recorder run off a single RCA 44-B microphone. Even though Rowles failed to show up at the first session on June 10, the other three musicians recorded three tunes ("Godchild," "Get Happy," and "S Wonderful") anyway without a pianist.

"Get Happy" and "S Wonderful" are recorded with Mulligan on baritone sax supported by Hamilton's light touch and brush work, and Mitchell's adept bass accompaniment and occasional tasteful interplay with the baritone lines. Mulligan plays the piano himself on "Godchild" for this trio session, producing a much

⁴⁵⁴ Mulligan, oral history.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid.

different interpretation of the Wallington tune than he had arranged and recorded three years earlier with the Davis Nonet and also with the Winding Septet. As Klinkowitz points out, Mulligan had emphasized the “arhythmic” nature of the low-pitched melody for Davis, while for Winding, he created a “swinging, spirited blowing vehicle.”⁴⁵⁶ Mulligan shows his flexibility as an arranger with this trio version of the tune. He initially establishes the melody with the bass, but instead of presenting the main “Godchild” theme of the earlier two versions, he has Mitchell state the shout chorus theme from two minutes into the Davis version (Figure 12).



Figure 12: “Godchild” shout chorus theme of Davis Nonet arrangement

This shout chorus theme had not even been used in the Winding version, probably because of its faster tempo. On this trio version, Mulligan introduces the main “Godchild” theme in the piano’s low register as a countermelody to the shout chorus theme. He then raises the interest of the arrangement by restating the theme a minor third higher. Mulligan’s piano solo comes out sounding tentative, yet lyrical. Mulligan would recycle the shout chorus theme in 1953 when he made it the main theme for “Ontet,” a composition that would also feature him on piano, this time with his tentette. Klinkowitz comments that “the tentette’s eventual appropriation of this song as Gerry’s own seems inevitable.”⁴⁵⁷

⁴⁵⁶ Klinkowitz, 69-70.

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid., 70.

At the next Monday night Haig session (June 16, 1952), Chet Baker joined in for what would be the first of countless Baker-Mulligan public performances. Mulligan recalls his initial impression of Baker's playing: "I had played with him a couple of times and I was very impressed with his melodic playing, which you don't usually hear in players at jam sessions . . . but Chet was *such* a melodic player."⁴⁵⁸ In his analysis of Baker's playing style, Quinn notes the trumpeter's propensity for smaller intervals and sequences in his solos, a contributing factor to Mulligan and others' admiration of Baker's approach to melody.

The analysis reveals the use of several melodic devices that result in the use of major and minor seconds in Baker's solo playing. Scalar passages, passing tones, chromatic passing tones, appoggiaturas, upper neighbors, and lower neighbors are prevalent in these solos and by their definitions result in the interval of a second. . . . Baker's abundant usage of major and minor thirds is the result of two particular melodic devices: chord outlining and embellishing tones (a stylistic trait held over from bebop). Baker's use of the sequence as a developmental device during his improvised solos also contributes to his preference for smaller intervals. Sequence, by definition, does not imply small intervals. However, Baker's use of the sequence is usually based on a motive with a small intervallic content.⁴⁵⁹

Chesney Henry Baker was born on December 23, 1929, in a modest Oklahoma farming community named Yale. He spent his early childhood living with his aunt in Oklahoma City while his father played guitar in a western band that broadcast regularly on the city's station WKY. Baker's father exposed him to jazz early by encouraging him to listen to trombonist Jack Teagarden. Gioia notes that

⁴⁵⁸ Mulligan, oral history.

⁴⁵⁹ Charles L. Quinn, "Chet Baker's Role in the 'Piano-Less Quartet' of Gerry Mulligan" (D.M. diss., Louisiana State University, 1996), 42.

Teagarden's brass work and vocal style somewhat foreshadow Baker's later work.⁴⁶⁰ Sudhalter describes Teagarden's style as "vocalized" with a delivery that conferred immediacy on every phrase he played, a characteristic also attributed to Baker.⁴⁶¹

When his father took a job with Lockheed in California around 1940, Baker and his mother later joined him, and they settled first in Glendale, and later in Hermosa Beach. While his mother encouraged him to sing (she took him to various amateur talent contests in the Los Angeles area), his father brought home a trombone to build upon his interest in Teagarden. Baker felt that the trombone was too big for him, so he switched to trumpet at age thirteen, began playing in school bands, and started listening to Bix Beiderbecke and Harry James.

After enlisting in the army at age sixteen, Baker was assigned to the 298th Army Band in Berlin. He was first exposed to modern jazz while listening to V-disks, and subsequently switched his allegiance from Beiderbecke and James to Gillespie, Davis, Fats Navarro, Red Rodney, and the Candoli brothers. Baker was unable to find playing opportunities after his 1948 discharge, so he re-enlisted in 1950, and was assigned to the Presidio Band in San Francisco. Fortunately for him, this assignment placed him in the center of the Bay Area modern jazz scene. He recalls, "I played in the band all day, went to sleep in the evening, got up around 1 a.m., and went to this after-hours club called Jimbo's in San Francisco. It didn't open until 2:30 a.m. So I'd go there and play until 6. Then I'd race back for reveille, play

⁴⁶⁰ Gioia, *West Coast Jazz*, 169.

⁴⁶¹ Richard M. Sudhalter, *Lost Chords: White Musicians and Their Contributions to Jazz, 1915-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 125.

in the band, and go back to sleep.”⁴⁶² When he made up his mind that he wanted out of the Army, he sought out the base psychiatrist with the hopes that he could convince him that he was not fit for service and should be discharged. His plan backfired when the Army subsequently transferred him to Fort Watchuka in the Arizona desert. Within a few months, he went AWOL and then went back to San Francisco and turned himself in. He feigned insanity again, was held in a psychiatric clinic, and then discharged when he was found to be “unadaptable to army life.”⁴⁶³ In 1952 he moved back to the Los Angeles area where he and his wife settled in Lynwood. Baker briefly played in Vido Musso’s big band and in Freddie “Snicklefritz” Fisher’s Dixieland band.

Two weeks after he stormed out of the audition with Mulligan, his fortune changed when he received a telegram from Dick Bock informing him that he had arranged an audition for Baker with Charlie Parker at the Tiffany Club. Baker recalls, “When I got to this club, every trumpet player in L. A. was there. I got up and played two tunes and he stopped the audition and hired me right on the spot. I was twenty-two and scared to death! But fortunately I knew the tunes that he [Parker] called.”⁴⁶⁴ Baker won the job and played a three-week engagement with Parker at the Tiffany. He continued to work with the altoist at other venues, such as the Say When in San Francisco and in various clubs in Oregon and in Canada. Despite the several infamous recollections of Parker’s relationships with his sidemen, Baker asserted,

⁴⁶² Rosenblum, 6.

⁴⁶³ Gioia, 170.

⁴⁶⁴ Rosenblum, 6.

“He [Parker] was gentle and protective of me. He wouldn’t let anyone give me anything. And at the end of every job, when he got paid, he would always try to get more money than the contract called for to split up with the musicians, to get the guys something extra.” Baker’s affiliation with bebop’s most celebrated player brought him much welcomed recognition. When Parker returned to New York, he supposedly told Gillespie and Davis, “There’s a white cat out in California who’s going eat you up.”⁴⁶⁵

On July 9, 1952, Bock took a quartet consisting of Mulligan, Baker, Rowles (this time he did show), and Joe Mondragon (bass) to the Universal Recording Studio in Hollywood for another session. The group recorded Mulligan arrangements of Jerome Kern’s “She Didn’t Say Yes, She Didn’t Say No” and Harry Akst’s “Dinah.” This was first ever recording of a Mulligan-Baker quartet, this time *with* piano and *without* drums. These uninspiring recordings feature individual solos by Mulligan, Rowles, and Baker with very little interplay among the three.

In mid July, Erroll Garner’s nightly performances at the Haig came to an end, and the club booked the Red Norvo Trio, featuring Norvo on vibraphone, Red Mitchell on bass, and Tal Farlow on guitar, for an engagement of indefinite length. Since the trio did not use a piano, owner John Bennett decided to put the concert grand piano that Garner had used in storage. This created a dilemma for Mulligan, whom Bock still wanted to be the off-night act. Mulligan recalls:

They [the Norvo Trio] didn’t use a piano at all, so they [the Haig] were now at a quandary: what to do about the off nights because they [the Norvo Trio] didn’t have a pianist and they certainly weren’t going to keep a grand piano on stage just to play on the one night. So, John

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid.

Bennett, one of the owners of the place, decided that what they should do is just get a little 66-key studio upright for the off nights. Of course, in the meantime, Dick [Bock] had said that he'd like me to put a group together to continue to play the off nights, and that I should take it over. I said, "Great," but when John [Bennett] said this about the piano I said, "Wait a minute! No, you won't!" An upright piano already felt like an insult, but an upright piano with sixty-six keys was going way too far. I said, "Let me think about it." So, I started to try to put together something without a piano.⁴⁶⁶

Since Mulligan had already considered the concept of a group without a piano when he was still in New York, he was now determined to put it into practice. He noted that "The idea of a band without one [a piano] is not new. The very first jazz bands did not use them; how could they? They were marching bands?"⁴⁶⁷ Horricks cites two groups, the Sidney-Bechet-Muggsy Spanier Big Four and the Kansas City Six of 1938/39 with Lester Young and Buck Clayton that had not used a piano but had used a guitar instead.⁴⁶⁸ Mulligan considered that as well.

I tried it with a guitar instead [of a piano] and various other ways. The first two or three weeks, we did it with various instrumentations. In the mean time, we thought about getting these other guys [Baker, Whitlock on bass, and Hamilton on drums] together to see if we could do it [without piano *or* guitar]. They were all up for it so we spent some time rehearsing and it worked. We had a good time with it. We went to work and by God, we were an instant success in Los Angeles.⁴⁶⁹

After five Monday nights, Mulligan had his personnel stabilized, and on August 16, Bock took the quartet to Turetsky's house again to record "Bernie's Tune" and "Lullaby of the Leaves." These recordings, the first of the Quartet's patented

⁴⁶⁶ Mulligan, oral history.

⁴⁶⁷ Horricks, *Gerry Mulligan's Ark*, 31.

⁴⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁴⁶⁹ Mulligan, oral history.

sound, were released by Pacific Jazz, a recording company created by Bock to market West Coast jazz to its growing audience.

Given the approximately three-minute maximum duration dictated by the 78-rpm format, Mulligan's arranging skills would be tested for the recording of the two tunes. He succeeds by incorporating short individual horn solos that are harmonically supported by the other horn and the bass. This is accomplished by having the accompanying horn play a simple yet appealing figure in the background, a figure that, with the soloist and the bass, either outlines or implies the chords of the song's progression. At the beginning of the tunes, he has either the sax or trumpet take the dominant role in presenting the theme. Klinkowitz observes that with "Bernie's Tune" and "Lullaby of the Leaves," "the quartet was producing precious miniatures, every note which seemed carefully selected to yield, from minimum resources, maximum effect."⁴⁷⁰ Understatement was also a desired effect, so the songs were played softly. The Quartet's performance was clearly a novel treatment of modern jazz presenting Mulligan's arranging talent at its smoothest and most restrained. This subdued sound would become so identified with the Quartet that, in 1955, John Graas already credits Mulligan with significantly influencing the development of West Coast jazz.

Mulligan's main contribution was to bring jazz dynamics down to the dynamic range of a string bass and then to use counterpoint in a natural, unschooled way. Some have called it being a miniaturist, but, anyway, it was the opposite of the sensationalism of a Pete Candoli or Maynard Ferguson. And I think we were all secretly happy at the success of Chet Baker, a guy who uses about an octave in a dynamic range of *ppp* to *mf*. . . . The West Coast restraint can be attributed then, I think, to Mulligan's influence. . . . But I believe that

⁴⁷⁰ Klinkowitz, 67.

Mulligan's influence served a great purpose in exposing lines and in requiring a softer-type drummer, like Larry Bunker and Chico Hamilton.⁴⁷¹

"Bernie's Tune" would become so identified with the quartet, that it was often thought that Mulligan wrote it. He clarifies the tune's origin:

Bernie Miller wrote "Bernie's Tune," but I never knew him. As far as I know, he was a piano player from Washington, DC, and I think he died by the time I encountered any of his tunes. . . . The recording company [Pacific Jazz] wanted to put "Bernie's Tune" in my name but I refused, because I always objected to bandleaders putting their names to something that wasn't theirs. . . . I told them to find out if he had a family so that the money could go to his heirs.⁴⁷²

During Mulligan's association with Kenton, the Orchestra played a thundering version of "Bernie's Tune" arranged by Gene Roland.

Mulligan's arrangement for the quartet begins with the lively theme presented in three-part harmony by trumpet, saxophone, and bass. The voicing is interesting here in that, over the opening D minor of the AABA form, Mulligan puts the sax line a major seventh (C#) above the tonic D in the bass, with the trumpet at the fifth (A) in the next higher octave (Figure 13).

The image shows a musical score for the opening of "Bernie's Tune" in 4/4 time. It features three staves: Trumpet (top), Bari. Sax (middle), and Bass (bottom). The key signature is D minor (two flats). The first measure is marked with a Dm7 chord. The second measure is marked with a Bb7 chord. The Trumpet part starts with a quarter rest, followed by a quarter note G, a quarter note A, a quarter note B, and a quarter note C. The Bari. Sax part starts with a quarter rest, followed by a quarter note C#, a quarter note D, a quarter note E, and a quarter note F. The Bass part starts with a quarter rest, followed by a quarter note D, a quarter note E, a quarter note F, and a quarter note G. The score continues for several measures, showing the interaction between the three instruments.

Figure 13: Opening to "Bernie's Tune"⁴⁷³

⁴⁷¹ Quoted in Nat and Nat Hentoff Shapiro, "A Quiet beat in California," *High Fidelity*, 5:43 (April 1955): 43.

⁴⁷² Jack, 146.

⁴⁷³ Transcription from Quinn, 52.

To keep the motion going and to provide a nice contrapuntal effect, the bass breaks out of the three-part harmony into a walking pattern when the horns play longer tones. Hamilton's active brush work is itself almost melodic, providing a fourth voice, an effect that is particularly appealing during pauses in the action of the other instruments. Mulligan presents a contrasting texture in the bridge where the sax and trumpet repeatedly answer one another with simple melodic material over the walking bass. In the second chorus, a new color-texture combination is heard with Mulligan's high-register rhythmic solo over walking bass and swinging drum pattern. Baker's melodic solo chorus follows with Mulligan staying in with a soft accompanying figure. The first sixteen bars of the third chorus consist of delightful baroque-like interplay between the two horns as they play rhythmically consistent eighth-note figures complete with both parallel and contrary motion. Hamilton plays a drum solo for the bridge, and the interplay returns for the final eight bars of the chorus. The arrangement closes with a sixteen-bar reprise of the opening theme ending on unison D putting Mulligan at almost the bottom of the baritone saxophone range.

"Lullaby of the Leaves" was written by Bernice Petkere and lyricist Joe Young in 1932 for the short-lived Broadway revue *Chamberlain Brown's Scrap Book*. It eventually became a favorite of jazz musicians, and many recordings followed, including those by Stan Kenton, Ella Fitzgerald, and Benny Goodman. This standard (also AABA form) provides Mulligan with more opportunity to integrate his novel compositional effects. The arrangement begins minimally, with solo saxophone presenting the theme in breathy style accompanied by walking bass

and barely audible brushes. The trumpet adds a supporting line underneath at the end of each ‘A’ segment (Figure 14).

Figure 14: Opening to “Lullaby of the Leaves”⁴⁷⁴

The bridge elevates the trumpet to the melody role with the saxophone quietly playing a simple line comprised of half-notes underneath. Baker maintains the dominant role into the next chorus with Mulligan providing an ever-so-tender accompanying line. Klinkowitz describes the effect as “much like program music in which Baker’s trumpet mimics the falling swirling leaves while Mulligan’s deeper horn takes the part of a cold November wind.”⁴⁷⁵ Mulligan takes over at the bridge through the end of the chorus with a solo in his signature high register. Hamilton and

⁴⁷⁴ Transcription from Quinn, 62.

⁴⁷⁵ Klinkowitz, 68.

Whitlock provide a double time feel for the first four bars of each ‘A’ segment of the next chorus as Mulligan and Baker play, in harmony, a new version of the theme comprised mostly of quarter notes. This is notable in that here, the rhythm section players become the more active participants. The original bridge is repeated, except that this time, the saxophone plays high, eventually reaching a concert G near the top of its range in unison with the trumpet. Gudmundson remarks that “The result is that the warm trumpet tone is lent a brightness and edge by the baritone, producing a timbre more brilliant than trumpet alone, more rich and warm than baritone alone.”⁴⁷⁶ The final eight bars have Mulligan playing the solo melody just as he did when the song began. The group extends the final cadence with an original contrapuntal coda. Throughout the recording, vibrato is virtually nonexistent. Gudmundson notes that “The chief tool used for timbre variation is the practice of employing different tessituras in various sections of the arrangement.”⁴⁷⁷

The initial thousand copies of the 78-rpm single with “Bernie’s Tune” and “Lullaby of the Leaves” sold well, and by the end of the summer, the Haig was packed on Monday nights with an overflowing crowd of people who wanted to see and hear the Quartet and its two front men, Chet Baker and Gerry Mulligan.

Much of the hype surrounding the Quartet stemmed from the fact that it did not have a piano. It was as if the group was more notable because of what it was lacking rather than for what it had: its melodic invention, contrapuntal effects, subdued rhythm section, and adventuresome approach. Rather than explaining his

⁴⁷⁶ Jon Karl Gudmundson, “The Gerry Mulligan Quartet of 1952-53: A Study of the Arranging Style Through Selected Transcriptions”(D.A. diss., University of Northern Colorado, 1999), 34.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid.

rationale for the pianoless configuration as simply a result of the physical limitations of the Haig, Mulligan expounds on his conscious desire to liberate his music from the constraints that result from using a piano. He says,

The piano is an orchestra and, as such, has naturally wonderful possibilities both as a solo instrument and also in conjunction with an ensemble. The piano's use with a rhythm section, where its function is to "feed" the chords of the progression to the soloist, has placed the piano in rather an uncreative and somewhat mechanical role. By eliminating this role from the piano in my group, I actually open whole new fields of exploration and possibilities when I do choose to use one. When a piano is used in a group, it necessarily plays the dominant role; the horns and bass must tune to it as it cannot tune to them, making it the dominant tonality. The piano's accepted function of constantly stating the chords of the progression makes the solo horn a slave to the whims of the piano player. The soloist is forced to adapt his line to the changes and alterations made by the pianist in the chords of the progression.⁴⁷⁸

He also elucidates the role of the bass in his ensemble:

I consider the string bass to be the basis of the sound of the group; the foundation around which the soloist builds his line, the main thread around which the two horns weave their contrapuntal interplay. It is possible with two voices to imply the sound of or impart the feeling of any chord or series of chords as Bach shows us so thoroughly and enjoyably in his inventions. It is obvious that the bass does not possess as wide a range of volume and dynamic possibilities as the drums and horns. It is therefore necessary to keep the overall volume in proportion to that of the bass in order to achieve an integrated group sound.⁴⁷⁹

Mulligan used the bass not simply as a rhythmic/harmonic foundation, but as a third voice. This approach produced a balanced sound, making it easier for one to hear the overall harmonic progression. Mulligan says, "I've always worked closer with the bass than most players. . . because to me the interest of what I play consists of the

⁴⁷⁸ Liner notes to *The Complete Pacific and Capitol Recordings of the Original Gerry Mulligan Quartet and Tentette with Chet Baker*, Mosaic MR5-102, 1952.

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid.

intervals I can hit with the bass. Constantly shifting intervals, and we get lovely little things between ourselves.”⁴⁸⁰ With this quartet, Mulligan brought a new understanding that harmonic responsibility could be shifted away from chordal instruments.

With respect to percussion, Mulligan had already made it clear that he detested the overpowering style of drumming characteristic of the Kenton band. The light touch, frequent brush work, condensed drum kit, and showmanship of Chico Hamilton was much more to his liking.

And Chico had his own unique approach. . . . He’d have maybe a snare drum, a high hat, a standing tom-tom, and maybe one top cymbal on a stand. No bass drum, no set of tom-toms, so it was a minimal set. Chico could be a little dangerous with drumsticks sometimes but he used to do things with solos that would put me away, and that was a big factor in the appeal of the group was that Chico had such a good show sense, that he brought that out in all of us so that the group wasn’t as introverted as Chet and I were. There was a quality about the music that was very accessible. It was clear, you could see through it. And Chico brought this kind of extroverted quality to it that kept the thing alive, and so there was some vitality there.⁴⁸¹

But Chet Baker, with his natural melodic sense, perfect ear, and incredible spontaneity, garnered the most respect from the Quartet’s leader. Years later, Mulligan told Horricks:

He [Baker] was the most perfect foil to work with. I’ve never yet to this day played with a musician who’s quicker or less afraid to make a mistake. We’d sail into some song as a group . . . we’d never played it before, never discussed it—it sounded like an arrangement. People would think it was an arrangement! “You must lock it in like that and play it that same way always,” they’d say. Modulations; endings—this is the wild thing. On the one hand it’s so simple, making endings—and it can be *hard*. Because everybody’s trying to avoid the cliché. Chet and I would roar into the cliché [ending] with open arms, take it, turn it around,

⁴⁸⁰ Horricks, *Gerry Mulligan’s Ark*, 32.

⁴⁸¹ Mulligan, oral history.

twist it inside out, tie bows on it, and it would come out as just an ideal ending. . . . Chet was kind of a fresh talent. He came along, there's no figuring where his influences were, where he learned what he knew. And his facility . . . I've never been around anybody who had a quicker relationship between his ears and his fingers. He was just uncanny—with that kind of real control; it's as simple as breathing with him. It's something that seldom happens, a talent that comes out in full bloom.⁴⁸²

Soon after the release of the single, the Quartet was booked for a week into The Blackhawk in San Francisco opposite Dave Brubecks's quartet. Mulligan remembers: "About this time, I heard from...I don't know who got in touch with me finally because I didn't have an agent yet. They wanted me to bring the Quartet up to the Blackhawk in San Francisco because apparently Dave Brubeck had been talking about it after he had been in to hear us [at the Haig]."⁴⁸³

For this engagement, Mulligan had to find a replacement on bass since Whitlock had left the group because, as he recalls, "I was broke and needed income, so I left town with Vido Musso's band."⁴⁸⁴ The Quartet's new bass player would be Carson Smith. Smith remembers the circumstances surrounding his joining the group when he returned to California after trying to make it in New York:

I found that [bassist] Harry Babasin was having a little session down in Inglewood and Chet Baker was there. This was the first time I played with him, and we had a ball. During the break we went outside to smoke a little grass and he asked if I would like to team up with a guy called Gerry Mulligan who had a quartet without a piano. . . . Gerry had a rehearsal a couple days later, and I sure liked what I heard. I did my best with what little experience I had, although I knew a lot of tunes, which impressed Gerry. . . . Except for some originals, very little of his stuff was laid out on paper.⁴⁸⁵

⁴⁸² Horricks, *Gerry Mulligan's Ark*, 33.

⁴⁸³ Mulligan, oral history.

⁴⁸⁴ Jack, 158.

⁴⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 159.

Smith's experience was consistent with Mulligan's philosophy, particularly with respect to the quartet leader's view of melody, not as a blowing vehicle, but as a critical basis from which the arrangement would evolve. Mulligan says,

We all had enough common material in our hands, of standards that we played all the time, but when we would play them, we didn't play them jam session style; we would play them for the tunes, for the songs themselves. So, naturally a style evolved out of that, by playing the melody in some kind of definite way, which I always liked. Great players were always able to play melodies in ways that were important. Bird was a great melody player, Pres and Louie, you know this was an important facility. So, the style of our quartet was based on it. It was based on the melody, which gave me a solid basis for accompanying lines. I could do the logical accompaniment lines because you knew where the blessed melody was going to be. You weren't whistling in an empty cornfield. So, the style of the band was almost implied by the instrumentation and the people playing. . . . We'd play some nights without ever discussing what we were going to play and when we got done it sounded like it was all arranged. It was really an uncanny rapport that Chet and I had, especially for making endings that were interesting, not sounding contrived but sounding natural and worked out. I never had that kind of experience with anybody else, ever.⁴⁸⁶

The Blackhawk, one of the leading San Francisco jazz clubs of the 1950s, was partially owned by the founders of Fantasy Records, Sol and Max Weiss. The Weisses had gotten into the recording business quite unintentionally. Jack Sheedy, the owner of a dixieland jazz label called Coronet records, had earlier been convinced by San Francisco disc jockey Jimmy Lyons to record the up and coming pianist Dave Brubeck. Sheedy recorded Brubeck, and then ran out of money, forcing him to forfeit the masters to the Weiss brothers who had been the owners of the local pressing plant where Coronet had its records manufactured. The brothers, who had now been pushed into the entertainment business, founded Fantasy records which would

⁴⁸⁶ Mulligan, oral history.

eventually achieve extraordinary success. The early years of Fantasy were focused on issuing recordings by Brubeck, vibraphonist Cal Tjader, and pianist Vince Guaraldi.

Ralph Gleason, the west coast editor of *Downbeat* who was also a cofounder of the Monterey Jazz Festival as well as the founding editor of *Rolling Stone* magazine, published an enthusiastic review of the Quartet's performance at the Blackhawk. He wrote:

For the first week of September, San Francisco was the modern musical center of the country. The Gerry Mulligan Quartet, certainly the freshest and most interesting sound to come out of jazz in some time, was holding forth at the Blackhawk and the joint was loaded night after night with every musician in town digging and shaking his head in wonder. . . . When Chico Hamilton took a drum solo, it was probably the first time in history that a jazz drummer's solo was so soft you had to whisper or be conspicuous. . . . They have worked out a book of originals, ballads, and sundry other numbers which have given them a fantastic, fugue-ish, funky, swinging and contrapuntal sound that is simply wonderful. Chet Baker, a young trumpeter recently out of the Army who played a bit with Parker on the coast, turns out to be one of the most impressive young musicians in years. As soon as he learns to project his personality to the audience and not rely on the music completely, he should be sensational. . . . Chico Hamilton, one of my favorite drummers from way back in the Floyd Ray days, plays drum solos with his fingers, gives the band a terrific kick and is their best selling asset. Mulligan, whose original mind must be credited with the group's musical personality, plays baritone, swings like mad, and will be a good front for the group with a little more experience. The bass man, Carson Smith, handled his intricate chores with ability and finesse. All in all, the group is a musical sensation, something of a musical luxury too, as I think they will be hard to sell without more showmanship. . . ⁴⁸⁷

Apparently, the Quartet's showmanship did not improve enough for Gleason, for by the following September, the group had fallen out of favor with him, prompting him to reverse his appraisal of Mulligan, now the "overrated child," and publish a scathing review in *Downbeat*. He writes:

⁴⁸⁷ Ralph Gleason, "Mr. Mulligan Has a Real Crazy Gerry-Built Crew," *Downbeat*, October 22, 1952: 8.

Sometime last summer, as constant readers may remember, I broke out into a nervous sweat over the Mulligan group which then had started its first fulltime job here in San Francisco at the Blackhawk. The Mulligan Quartet was like a shot in the arm. The shock of first hearing them was terrific. Their first kicks, as Mezz Mezzrow (you should excuse the expression) said, are a killer. But, unfortunately, their first kicks can wear kind of thin after a while. . . . By the end of the Mulligan tour of duty at the Hawk, they were boring me silly. I thought it might be because of certain differences in opinion within the group, and tried to ignore it. Their first discs on Pacific Jazz and Fantasy were a kick when first heard, but, [by the end of the summer], the tinsel was already considerably dulled. By now, the Mulligan moments are few and far between. . . . I frankly think that the Mulligan Quartet is, with one exception, the most overrated small band in jazz. . . . Mulligan, with or without a piano, and with or without his pretentious explanations of what he's doing, is still a child when racked up against men like Duke [Ellington]. Twenty-five years from now, I suggest we will still be playing Duke and Woody [Herman] and the wonderful Count Basie—yes, and Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker too. Mulligan, I think, will not last as long as Muggsy Spanier.⁴⁸⁸

Notwithstanding Gleason's prophecy, twenty-five years later (1978), Mulligan not only headlined at President Carter's "Jazz at the White House" concert celebrating the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Newport Jazz Festival, but, for the twenty-fifth year in a row, placed first in the *Downbeat* Readers' Poll for best baritone saxophonist. In 1962, Gleason backtracked and featured the Mulligan Quartet on *Jazz Casual*, the television series Gleason hosted for National Educational Television (now PBS) from 1961 to 1968.

While in San Francisco for the Blackhawk engagement, the Quartet recorded five selections for Fantasy on Brubeck's recommendation. Two were Mulligan originals dedicated to a pair of Bay Area disc jockeys: "Line for Lyons" for Jimmy Lyons and "Bark for Barksdale" for Don Barksdale. These compositions both

⁴⁸⁸ Ralph Gleason, "Ralph Mulls Mulligan, Finds Overrated Child," *Downbeat*, September 23, 1953: 8.

demonstrate the success of Mulligan's orchestration, in that rather than being weakened by the reduced instrumentation, they are actually better for it. Mulligan's confidence as a player is demonstrably improved perhaps, because of his instrument's exposure due to the thin orchestration, he now has nowhere to hide. The group also recorded "My Funny Valentine," the dirge-tempo arrangement that has become more identified with Baker than probably any other tune, "Carioca," and a duplicate recording of "Lullaby of the Leaves." Mulligan had mixed feelings about doing the session.

Sol Weiss, one of the brothers that owned Fantasy (I tended to be sympathetic to Fantasy because Dave [Brubeck] and I had become friends), wanted me to come and record for him. I didn't feel like I could because I had started this thing with Dick Bock and I felt like my first commitment was to [Bock's] Pacific Jazz. But I got so much pressure from the other guys in the group because they were looking at it in terms of income. You know, it was like here we were offered an album, and it's real money and I'm turning it down. They really pressured me and I finally knuckled under. And I always felt bad about it and doubly so because, in the end, I think that was the best album that we did. Those were the first LP albums, the Fantasy 78 – 10" records. Remember they did them on red vinyl? Very high quality stuff. . . . It was not really good for my relationship with Dick and Pacific Jazz. But then we went back to Los Angeles to record with Dick, and we did a lot of albums with him and then of course, he [later] recorded Chet with his own group.⁴⁸⁹

Shipton observes that the blend between improvisation and arrangement in these and later recordings of the Mulligan Quartet is comparable to that of the Modern Jazz Quartet. He feels that the fact that both Chet Baker and MJQ vibraphonist Milt Jackson were both slow at reading music is a contributing factor to this parallel.

⁴⁸⁹ Mulligan, oral history.

[Jackson] relied on his exceptional ear to busk his way through arrangements with Dizzy Gillespie, but there was always a strong element of the instinctive about his playing. When he joined Mulligan, Baker could read, but he was more of a “speller” than a fluent sight-reader. He consequently ended up playing an intuitive, more completely improvised part compared to that of Mulligan, just as Jackson’s extemporaneous lines were counterbalanced by John Lewis’s more controlled, cerebral piano.⁴⁹⁰

For example, In “Line for Lyons,” Baker presents the melody with Mulligan supporting it with a thoughtful line below (Figure 15).

The image shows a musical score for the opening of "Line for Lyons" in 4/4 time, featuring a key signature of two flats (Bb and Eb). The score is divided into two systems. The first system shows the Trumpet part in the upper staff and the Baritone Sax part in the lower staff. The Trumpet part begins with a melodic line starting on Bb, moving up stepwise to Eb, then Ab, and finally G. The Baritone Sax part provides a rhythmic accompaniment with eighth and quarter notes. Chord symbols are placed above the staff lines: Bb, Ebm7, Ab7, Dm7, G7, Cm7, and F7. The second system continues the melody and accompaniment, with chord symbols Bb, Gm7, Cm7, F7, Bb, Bdim7, Cm7, and F7.

Figure 15: Trumpet and baritone sax lines in opening to “Line for Lyons”

Mulligan’s imaginative harmonization continues through Baker’s improvised solo. But when Mulligan solos, Baker does not play—a scenario that is common across most of the Quartet’s recordings.

In an interview with Gene Lees, Mulligan reacted to the common perception regarding Baker’s capabilities:

People love to say Chet couldn’t read: he could read. It’s not a question of whether he couldn’t read chords or anything like that. It’s

⁴⁹⁰ Shipton, 706.

that he didn't care. He had one of the quickest connections between mind, hand, and chops that I have ever encountered. He really played by ear, and he could play intricate progressions.⁴⁹¹

In comparison, with respect to his own music facility, Mulligan comments:

Well, at my best, I'm playing by ear! But I often am saddled with thinking chords until I learn a tune. And I have to learn a tune some kind of way. And, really, my connection between my ears and my hands is not that quick. Sure, when I've got a tune firmly under hand—which is different than having it firmly in mind—I'm playing by ear. It's taken me a long time to connect up.⁴⁹²

When the group returned to Los Angeles, they were booked into the Haig, this time as the main attraction, for an engagement which was originally intended to last four weeks, but was stretched to over six months. The Quartet had become very popular, largely because Mulligan recognized the importance of pacing a show with a wide variety of material. Whitlock, who had returned to the Quartet 1952 when Smith went out on the road with Billy May, remembers that “We not only played standards and originals but also everything from Latin sambas to tunes from Disney movies. There was something for everyone and the caliber of musicianship was always convincing.”⁴⁹³ To the contrary, Nat Hentoff observed that at first, the Quartet was puzzling to the audience.

The two horns tried to improvise simultaneously for relatively long stretches of time—a feat that was a good deal harder than the usual procedure of having one solo while the other provides background riffs or is silent. At first, the spontaneous counterpoint sometimes faltered and only the bass and drums were heard, but the quartet quickly fused into an unusually flowing unit. “The feeling,” Bock says, “was as if

⁴⁹¹ Lees, *Arranging the Score*, 113.

⁴⁹² Ibid.

⁴⁹³ Jack, 160.

they were talking to each other on their horns, interweaving vocalized lines.”⁴⁹⁴

Mulligan’s interaction with his audience at the Haig was known to be unorthodox. The May 20 issue of *Downbeat* reported that any disturbances from the crowd would cause Mulligan to stop the band in its tracks so that he could castigate the guilty party. He remembers:

Well, in those days, what I did at the Haig seemed perfectly justified because it was a small room. It only seated about ninety people. If you really crowded them in, you could get 110 people at the tables and at the bar. So, if you got one noisy table, they’d make it impossible for everybody to hear. And since the people were paying an admission to come in and were sitting there listening to the music, I thought it was unfair. I tried to do it in ways so that I didn’t appear angry at the audience. People may have certainly perceived it as being angry, but I wasn’t. But the thing was, it’s already going to appear angry if you say to people, “Listen if you picked a place to come talk, you picked the wrong room. There’s a bar up the street where you can sit and talk to your heart’s content, and nobody will be bothered. But in here, everybody is trying to listen except you.”⁴⁹⁵

As reported in the June 3rd issue of *Downbeat*, Howard Rumsey, who was still performing at the Lighthouse, blasted Mulligan’s behavior. He said, “Gerry Mulligan is just putting on his act. I think he’s nuts if he figures he can win a following for his music by insulting customers at the Haig just because some of them insist on talking and having a few laughs while he’s playing.”⁴⁹⁶ To justify the actions of the ‘guilty’ customers, Rumsey then goes on to criticize the Quartet’s live performances as being inferior to what was going on at the Lighthouse. “Mulligan is reverting to the old jam session idea in his musical thinking. His records are great, though limited in scope,

⁴⁹⁴ Hentoff, "Profiles, 'In the Mainstream: Gerry Mulligan - II'," 54.

⁴⁹⁵ Mulligan, oral history.

⁴⁹⁶ “Mulligan's Blast was Just an Act: Rumsey,” *Downbeat*, June 3, 1963: 6.

because everything is worked out in advance and memorized. But at the Haig, after they have run through a few of their prepared things, they sound like they are merely experimenting. At the Lighthouse we don't experiment on the job—we play music.”⁴⁹⁷ In an effort to protect the Haig's main attraction, Bock replies, “Gerry is right. We're back of him on his stand. And if anyone in the Haig gets noisy while Gerry is playing, we tell him to shut up or get out!”⁴⁹⁸

On October 15 and 16, 1952, Bock took the Quartet to Gold Star Studios for an additional recording for Pacific Jazz. For this session, Whitlock returned to the group after Smith left to go on tour with Billy May. Whitlock was only too happy to leave Vido Musso, whose big hit at the time was “Come Back to Sorrento.” “After a few weeks of ‘Sorrento,’ I was ready to go back as his [Mulligan's] gardener if necessary.”⁴⁹⁹ At the Gold Star session, the group recorded “Aren't You Glad You're You,” written by Johnny Burke and Jimmy Van Heusen for Bing Crosby in the 1945 movie *Bells of St. Mary's*; “Frenesi,” the 1940 Latin jazz standard written by Alberto Dominguez; three Mulligan originals: “Nights at the Turntable,” “Soft Shoe,” and “Walkin' Shoes” (originally written for Kenton), and “Freeway,” a Baker original.

Mulligan's imaginative arrangements for the session once again exposed the group's signature sound, a sound characterized by the mutually complementary interplay between Baker's elegiac sense of melody and Mulligan's attention to the overall effect and his methodology to bring it all together. As the result, while the

⁴⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁹ Jack, 159.

individual playing was pleasing, the combination was far greater than the sum of the parts. As with the Davis Nonet, Mulligan again used the fewest number of instruments to create the desired effect.

Despite Baker and Mulligan's superlative musical compatibility, their respective personal styles were quite opposite, and this resulted in a less than desirable relationship between the two, eventually leading to the demise of their partnership. Mulligan's recollection:

Well, the [musical] compatibility didn't really extend toward our personal relationship very much. We always got along and had a good time together, but we were such totally different people with different kinds of attitudes of how we wanted to live. For instance, I was always kind of a loner. I always had a handful of friends, and I always liked to hang out with friends where music was usually the focus. Chet, on the other hand, always liked to travel in a pack. I can never remember Chet in those Los Angeles days when he didn't have four or five guys with him. They used to travel everywhere together and Chet was their leader. But then Chet would come to the quartet environment, and *I* was the leader. That kind of confused these guys, who I don't think ever really quite figured out what was going on. They [Baker and his 'pack'] used to do amazing things. For example, they would finish playing with the quartet around two in the morning. Then they'd get in their cars and drive up to Bear Mountain [150 miles from L.A.] and ski. They'd spend the morning skiing and they'd spend however many hours it is driving back. *Then*, they'd go down to the beach, and in the afternoon, they'd be surfing, swimming, and playing. *Then*, Chet would come into the gig at night, and he would do this sometimes three or four days in a row with whatever variations. Those are just things I *knew* they did, but they always did all of these highly energetic sporting things, and it would just go on and on and on.⁵⁰⁰

Much to Mulligan's chagrin, Baker's free-spirited lifestyle would sometimes negatively affect the trumpeter's performances at the Haig.

After a number of days of this, Chet's lips would start to get dried out and chapped, and he started missing notes all over the place, and generally was playing sloppily. And when he would play sloppily, he

⁵⁰⁰ Mulligan, oral history.

would get mad at himself and just complain and bitch and say, “Well, what’s going on?” Well, I finally said to him, “Chet, there’s a remedy for the problem you’re having here. It’s called sleep.” I said, “If you’d sleep once in awhile you would be having so much trouble playing.” So, in this regard, we were quite different.⁵⁰¹

Klinkowitz observes that starting with the initial session at Turetsky’s house in June 1952, Mulligan recorded an impressive seventy-seven numbers over the next year.⁵⁰² Most of them were for Bock’s Pacific Jazz, but there were also nine recordings for Fantasy Records and a quartet recording for Gene Norman. Since then, these sides have been reissued in various combinations. *Gerry Mulligan Quartet* (World Pacific PJ-1207) contains some of the most popular cuts from Bock’s library, while the lesser-known recordings have been included on *The Genius of Gerry Mulligan* (PJ-8). The complete collection of Mulligan’s Pacific Jazz recordings is available as a five-record or three-CD set issued by Mosaic as *The Complete Pacific Jazz and Capitol Recordings of the Original Gerry Mulligan Quartet and Tentette with Chet Baker* (MR5-102). *Gerry Mulligan Tentette* (Capitol Jazz Classics Volume 4, M-11029) and *Gerry Mulligan Tentette and Quartet* (Quintessence Jazz, QJ-25321) contain additional sides for the larger group. The Fantasy recordings are included on *The Gerry Mulligan Quartet/The Paul Desmond Quintet* (Fantasy 3-220) and a reissue on Prestige 24016, *Gerry Mulligan and Chet Baker. Gerry Mulligan with Chet Baker (Special Added Attraction: Buddy DeFranco and His Quartet with Voices)* contains the quartet work for Gene Norman (GNPS 56).

It is interesting that Max Harrison explains that the Quartet’s popularity as resulting from the American audience’s inability to digest the complexity of bebop.

⁵⁰¹ Ibid.

⁵⁰² Klinkowitz, 68.

The [Quartet's] outward modernity accorded well with the view widely expressed in the bulk of American jazz writing that newness is intrinsically good. Along with the prestige this entailed, was the actual simplicity of the music. We have seen that its instrumentation threw emphasis on clear melodic expression and simple rhythmic construction. The resulting lack of tension was another attraction. Whereas artists like Tatum and Parker compel our attention with hectic complexity of their work, the somewhat detached relaxation of the Mulligan Quartet entertains and even intrigues the listener without unduly involving him. Thus audiences who failed to respond to the uncompromising attitude of bebop or the Davis 1948/49 band were able, in listening to the Quartet, to congratulate themselves on their advanced taste while really experiencing straightforward music.⁵⁰³

This view is somewhat problematic in that it reduces the Quartet to merely a means for unsophisticated listeners to fashionably position themselves as jazz fans, rather than to recognize the differentiating characteristics of the group presented above that would have been attractive.

The popularity of the group can be more accurately attributed to Pacific Jazz and Fantasy's successful distribution of the many 78 rpm singles ("Line for Lyons," "My Funny Valentine," "Festive Minor," and "Bernie's Tune" were especially popular) and 10-inch LPs which were often leased to other jazz labels around the world. Mulligan remarked that "We were getting tremendous airplay on all kinds of stations. Like here's poor old isolated jazz getting plays on pop programs!"⁵⁰⁴

Shipton notes that the proliferation of the Quartet's music through the release of the numerous Pacific Jazz records had an interesting influence on a style of jazz that would become very popular at end of the 1950s.

There was a somewhat unexpected side-effect of the Mulligan Quartet's discs, in that, later in the decade, they apparently exerted a

⁵⁰³ Max Harrison, quoted in Raymond Horricks, *Gerry Mulligan's Ark*, 35-6.

⁵⁰⁴ Horricks, 36.

profound influence over the bossa nova craze. In 1950s Brazil, American jazz records were not easy to come by, but the exception seems to have been Bock's Pacific Jazz label, and the quartet's suave, elegant sides were much admired by Antonio Carlos Jobim and João Gilberto in creating their own distinctive brand of restrained excitement.⁵⁰⁵

Jobim told Gene Lees that "part of the ideal of the bossa nova movement was to achieve acoustical rather than electronic balances in the music, one of the keys to Mulligan's thinking."⁵⁰⁶ When Jobim came to New York for a Carnegie Hall concert of Brazilian musicians, he met Mulligan, and the two became good friends.

Despite Mulligan's having spent less than a year in California, his music became increasingly associated with the West Coast. In February 1953, *Time* magazine gave Mulligan and the Quartet national recognition when the following story, entitled "Counterpoint Jazz," was published:

The hot music topic in Los Angeles last week was the cool jazz of a gaunt, hungry-looking young (25) fellow named Gerry Mulligan, who plays the baritone saxophone. For the past three months, Mulligan's quartet has been performing in a nightclub known as the Haig, a spot that has featured such stalwarts as Red Norvo and Erroll Garner—and he was drawing the biggest crowds in the club's history. Says the Haig's happy manager: "People just like his kind of sound."

Mulligan's kind of sound is just about unique in the jazz field: his quartet uses neither piano nor guitar, does its work with trumpet, bass, drums and, of course, Mulligan's hoarse-voiced baritone sax. In comparison with the frantic extremes of bop, his jazz is rich and even orderly, is marked by an almost Bach-like counterpoint. As in Bach, each Mulligan man is busily looking for a pause, a hole in the music which he can fill with an answering phrase. Sometimes the polyphony is reminiscent of tailgate blues, sometimes it comes tumbling with bell-over-mouthpiece impromptu.

Eyes Shut. Gerald Joseph Mulligan looks more extreme than he sounds. His hair is cut for a Jerry Lewis effect, crew-cropped on top,

⁵⁰⁵ Shipton, 708.

⁵⁰⁶ Lees, 177.

bangs in front. He has a sleepy face, and on the bandstand he keeps his watery-green eyes closed even when listening to Trumpeter Chet Baker, opens them only occasionally to glower at customers who are boorish enough to talk against the music.

Mulligan is extremely serious about his music. As early as he can remember, he was inventing tunes of his own on the piano—"I hate to play other people's." In seventh grade he got a clarinet and made his first arrangement. By his senior year at Philadelphia's West Catholic High School, he was a full-fledged arranger, and his studies had fallen off lamentably. "I walked into physics class and listened to the teacher. Man, I didn't get a word of it. Right then and there, I quit."

But his arranging got him high marks, and he worked for such bandleaders as Tommy Tucker and Claude Thornhill, looking for ideas in his favorite composers —Stravinsky, Ravel, Prokofiev and Bach. When he turned to playing, he could blow ragtime, Dixieland, the blues and bop, but he refused to be categorized: "It would be senseless to start playing and sound like anybody else."

But Sleep Can Wait. Last June he walked into the Haig stony-broke. Somebody lent him a horn, and he began sitting in on jam sessions. Within a month he was leading the sessions and drawing customers. Pacific Jazz Records recorded an LP of the quartet playing a few jazz standards and some of Gerry's own compositions, e.g., Soft Shoe, Nights at the Turntable. The Haig put Gerry in headline position at \$200 a week.

After a long evening at the horn, Jazzman Mulligan finds he is too keyed up by 2 a.m. to sleep, so he stays up until 6 writing new tunes and arrangements. Next Mulligan objective: an enlarged band and a nationwide tour. "I've got to keep moving. I've got to grow."⁵⁰⁷

And grow he would—into a ten-piece ensemble with a pianoless rhythm section.

⁵⁰⁷ "Counterpoint Jazz", *Time*, February 2, 1953.

1953 Tentette

Well, the tentette I did during some of those early months with the Quartet because I'd had it in mind to do that. The tentette was based on the [Miles Davis] Nonet, the *Birth of the Cool* instrumentation. The main difference was that I added a saxophone so I had two baritones. I had a baritone playing with the ensemble, and I was freed up for more of a solo role so that I could do more things with solo trumpet and baritone like the quartet. That gave an extra dimension to the possibilities of arranging. . . . I always felt that in the *Birth of the Cool* band, we could have used a second trumpet. Miles was always able to pull it off, but he had his horn in his face a lot during the course of the night. You know, he played solos and he played lead and he was playing backgrounds. So, it really is an awful lot for one player to do. . . . So, I wanted to split those [trumpet] chores. Also, at that point, I didn't really know that much about Chet's ability to play in a [larger] ensemble. There were always these rumors around that Chet couldn't read notes. I never talked to him about it. I just put a piece of music in front of him, and he played it. . . . So, it's part of the legend that people put together about somebody. That even if somebody never practices, but if they're a great player, you know they practiced at some point in their life.⁵⁰⁸

Soon after the article in *Time* appeared, Mulligan married Jeffie Lee Boyd, a nineteen-year-old friend of Bock's who had been a student at the City College of Los Angeles. She and Mulligan met after Bock had gotten her a job as a waitress at the Haig. She remembers:

I was very taken with him. . . . But I wasn't strong enough to know what he needed. At that time, he used to say that he was sure of himself, and for a while he convinced me that he was. He always had his head up, even if he only had one shirt. Now that I'm older and I know a little more, I realize that he wasn't that self-assured. He needed a lot of support.⁵⁰⁹

The problem stemmed from the fact that Mulligan was failing at his attempts to withdraw from heroin. According to Carson Smith, the couple eloped to Palm

⁵⁰⁸ Mulligan, oral history.

⁵⁰⁹ Hentoff, "Profiles, 'In the Mainstream: Gerry Mulligan – II,'" 60.

Springs with the hopes that he could dry out there.⁵¹⁰ The marriage lasted about a month before it ended in an annulment.

During the Quartet's extraordinarily productive year (1952-53), Mulligan organized and recorded two temporary ensembles: a tentette based on the structure of his ten-piece New York group of a few years earlier, and a quintet which came about when alto saxophonist Lee Konitz sat in with the Quartet at the Haig. For each of these ad hoc ensembles, the Quartet remained the foundation for Mulligan's arrangements.

He recalls, "I started the tentette as a rehearsal band to have something to write for."⁵¹¹ For this ensemble, Mulligan supplemented the New York instrumentation by adding French horn and tuba, reminiscent of the Davis Nonet days. He also bought back the alto saxophone, replacing the tenor he had used in New York, and dropped both the maracas and piano (except when Mulligan doubled on piano). The resulting ensemble consisted of two trumpets (Baker and Pete Candoli), alto saxophone (Bud Shank), two baritone saxophones (Mulligan and Don Davidson), valve trombone (Bob Enevoldsen), French horn (John Graas), tuba (Ray Siegel), bass (Joe Mondragon), and drums (Chico Hamilton or Larry Bunker). "The tentette," Mulligan explained, "is essentially my original Quartet with Chet Baker combined with the ensemble instrumentation of the Miles Davis Nonet. . . .

⁵¹⁰ Jack, 169.

⁵¹¹ Liner notes to *The Complete Pacific and Capitol Recordings of the Original Gerry Mulligan Quartet and Tentette with Chet Baker*.

Musically, I think the ensemble worked perfectly with the quartet concept and the band was very easy to write for.”⁵¹²

Much to Carson Smith’s dismay, Mulligan replaced him with Joe Mondragon, the former Woody Herman First Herd bassist, for the tentette date. Smith remembers:

One night at the club [Haig], Gerry seemed a little hostile to me and I asked him what the problem was. He said, “I’ve been really listening to you the last few nights, and I’m not getting the feeling I want. There is something wrong with this rhythm section because you and Larry [Bunker] aren’t playing well together. I’m not happy and I’ll be looking for a new bass player in the next few days. Carson, that’s where it is right now.” I told him that I thought we’d been playing better and better each night, but if there was something he wanted me change, I would change it. He wouldn’t listen, and I was heartbroken. Then it turned out that he had his tentette date, and started rehearsing with Joe Mondragon.⁵¹³

Mulligan rehired Smith after the Tentette sessions.

Mulligan’s use of Candoli in tandem with Baker was curious in that Candoli’s reputation, particularly after his tenure with Kenton, was that of a high-note lead trumpeter—the antithesis of Baker. Mulligan explains: “Because I didn’t think Chet wanted to play lead, I brought in Pete Candoli so that he didn’t have that responsibility. In any event, Chet wound up playing most of the lead parts anyway, so I had Pete, who was a high-note man, on second trumpet.”⁵¹⁴

Bunker became Mulligan’s drummer after Hamilton left the Quartet to go on the road. Mulligan remembers the circumstances surrounding Hamilton’s departure.

Chico got a call from Lena Horne, who wanted him to come back on the road with her. He had been part of her rhythm section before, and

⁵¹² Ibid.

⁵¹³ Jack, 169.

⁵¹⁴ Ibid., 147.

he wanted to make more money. He could make a lot more money on the road with Lena Horne than he could at the Haig playing with a quartet because the small club was paying peanuts.⁵¹⁵

Hamilton later reflected, “I have often wondered what would have happened if I had stayed [with Mulligan], because they were good times, and Gerry and Chet became virtual superstars.”⁵¹⁶ But Hamilton, who had a wife and family to support, was getting only union scale at the Haig, a lot less than what he could earn playing for Horne. Despite this, Mulligan did not take Hamilton’s departure very well, and his quick temper led to an unfortunate accident, which in turn would lead to a new association with, of all people, Stan Getz.

So, he [Hamilton] was very apologetic about it and sorry to do it, but you know, he had a wife and kids and responsibilities and home and family, so he had to take off. I was really upset with that. That was the beginning of kind of a rough period. I got very angry about it, and I got so mad, I tossed my horn across the room and stomped out of the place. And that night, I was still fuming, and some car pulled out in front of me, and I hit the brakes too hard in my exuberance. The brakes locked, and the car slid into a light pole. When I realized what was happening, I see this light pole looming and I said, “Oh my God, I hope these electric wires don’t land on the car.” You know, you see a replay of the last couple of weeks of your life. Well, as it happened, I demolished the car and broke my nose and laid myself up for awhile. They were all set to charge me with the cost of the electric light, but somebody had been on the sidewalk and had seen the thing and said that this car had cut me off. So, they decided I was the victim of a hit and run, and I didn’t have to pay for the lights then. I was lucky that somebody was watching, because I wasn’t. . . . Well, in this instance now, we needed a sub for me at the club because I couldn’t play for a couple of weeks while my nose was healing. So, we called up Stan Getz to help out, and he did. He came in and played with the band in my place for a couple of weeks.⁵¹⁷

⁵¹⁵ Mulligan, oral history.

⁵¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 162.

⁵¹⁷ Mulligan, oral history.

Bunker, who worked for Mulligan fulltime from January to June 1953, was particularly enamored of the musical abilities of both his leader and Chet Baker. He remembers Baker as:

. . . a brilliantly talented juvenile delinquent. . . Gerry was right on the money when he said, “Chet knew everything about chords; he just didn’t know their names.” When other musicians realized that he didn’t have any theoretical knowledge, they would sometimes try to get him at jam sessions by calling tunes in ridiculous keys that nobody was familiar with, hoping to trap him. They would try “Body and Soul” in G-flat, for instance, but it didn’t matter at all, because they could have said Q-flat and Chet would have been able to play it.⁵¹⁸

On the other hand, Bunker remembers Mulligan as the learned one (despite being an autodidact) “who was enormously knowledgeable and skilled in harmonic structure and chord changes—all of that.”⁵¹⁹ Bunker particularly remembers an incident that occurred during one of the tentette rehearsals which demonstrated Mulligan’s agility as an arranger despite his unorthodox behavior.

We rehearsed one of the pieces, and after we made a take on it, we listened to the playback. Gerry flopped down on the floor in the middle of the studio, concentrating in a really dramatic, Christ-like pose, with his arms outstretched and his eyes closed. When the recording was finished, he got up off the floor and said, “O.K., guys—pencils.” He then proceeded to dictate a new road map for the chart, which completely rearranged it, and when he counted us in, it was like a brand new piece of music.⁵²⁰

The Tentette recorded eight numbers at Capitol Studios on the two sessions of January 29th and January 31st: “Westwood Walk,” “Walkin’ Shoes,” “Rocker,” “A Ballad,” “Taking a Chance on Love,” “Simbah,” “Flash,” and “Ontet.” Seven of the

⁵¹⁸ Ibid., 164-65.

⁵¹⁹ Ibid.

⁵²⁰ Ibid.

eight were Mulligan originals, the exception being the popular Vernon Duke standard “Takin’ a Chance on Love.” The contractual arrangements surrounding the subsequent release of the recordings were a bit convoluted, as Mulligan explains:

Gene Norman, a Los Angeles promoter and disc jockey, came to me and said he’d like to record the band. Since no one else had suggested recording us, I said yes. The irony, as I found out later, was that Gene had no American Federation of Musicians’ recording license of his own and planned to offer the date to Capitol if he could record on their license. Bill Miller of Capitol told me later that he had heard about the band from musicians and was planning to come to the Haig to discuss recording when Gene came to him with the proposal. Since Bill felt it would be unethical to pursue the project directly for Capitol, we ultimately did the album for Gene. So it goes in the complicated and often insensitive precincts of business.⁵²¹

Therefore, the initial album containing all eight recordings was released as part of the “Gene Norman Presents” series, with subsequent reissues by Capitol Records. In his liner notes to the album, Norman remarks about the Tentette: “The moods and feelings captured here range all the way from something resembling a German Salvation Army Band playing on a Heidelberg street corner - with a beat - to the reckless abandon of a Deep South Revivalist meeting. But all the way, it's ingenious, challenging, and warm. This is what jazz is coming to. In fact, it's here!” Mulligan later lamented about the recording agreement between Norman and Capitol: “I sometimes felt that we might have done another album if I’d done it directly for Capitol, but I don’t know. There were too many other factors that ultimately got in the way.”⁵²²

⁵²¹ Liner notes to *The Complete Pacific and Capitol Recordings of the Original Gerry Mulligan Quartet and Tentette with Chet Baker*.

⁵²² Mulligan, oral history.

It had been three years since Capitol recorded the Davis Nonet in its New York studios. The improvements in the recording techniques of a similarly-configured ensemble, the Mulligan Tentette, are unmistakable in the resulting 1953 cuts. Welding also notes that “Mulligan’s subtle, more mature orchestrations provided for a much fuller, more harmonious integration between soloists—chiefly Baker and himself—and settings than had characterized his writing for the earlier tentette.”⁵²³ This is immediately evident with “Westwood Walk,” which opens with the ensemble presenting the theme in a closely voiced harmony. The attacks seem much lighter than with the Davis ensemble, not only because the individual instruments were balanced in the mixing process, but because Mulligan now writes the trumpet and alto saxophone in a lower range, closer to that of the other instruments. His scoring of valve rather than slide trombone, an anticipation of his later work with Bob Brookmeyer, would also result in lighter articulation. Mulligan complements Baker’s solo with a tastefully understated ensemble accompaniment that begins with a low brass unison line which then morphs into a clever interaction between the low and high instruments. As a contrast, for his baritone solo, Mulligan is accompanied only by walking bass and drums with brushes, the result being the sound of the pianoless quartet.

This would be the third (and certainly not the last) recorded arrangement of “Walkin’ Shoes,” with the first being the score for Kenton, and the second being the pianoless quartet version which had been recorded just ten weeks earlier. Here, Mulligan has the baritone sax, trombone, and alto sax present the shuffling theme in

⁵²³ Pete Welding, Liner notes to *The Complete Pacific and Capitol Recordings of the Original Gerry Mulligan Quartet and Tentette with Chet Baker*.

unison octaves joined by a blues-inflected countermelody in the brass, a feature not included in the earlier versions. The ensemble accompaniment to Mulligan's baritone solo is characterized by alternating sections of unison lines and dense harmony, obviously missing in the quartet version. The dynamic control of these ensemble sections is impressive with its effective integration of crescendo and diminuendo.

Mulligan's tentette arrangement of "Rocker," his fourth (after versions for Elliott Lawrence, Charlie Parker with strings, and the Davis Nonet), is his best. Here, he takes full advantage of the instrumentation by creating a richer, fuller sound in the ensemble sections while providing the perfect foundation over which he and Baker solo. The melody is enhanced by contrapuntal effects, a pleasant alternative to the rather sparse versions for Parker and Davis. Comparing the Tentette version to the Davis Nonet version, Welding observes that the score for the Tentette "incorporated a number of changes he had subsequently made to the original orchestration, adding backdrops to the solos but eliminating the thematic variation he had written for the last chorus of the Davis band reading."⁵²⁴

Mulligan features himself on piano in the third chorus of "Takin' a Chance on Love." Even though he demonstrates that he can follow the chord progression, his solo is unimpressive; half way through, he abandons his attempts to comp and completes the solo one-handed. The lively arrangement, however, is very good, characterized by parallel voicing of the melody in a very rhythmic presentation. Mulligan leaves room for himself in the first chorus to improvise on baritone sax on the bridge. For Baker's solo in the second chorus, however, Mulligan's piano

⁵²⁴ Ibid.

comping would have been better omitted, since it seems to be at odds with the arranged ensemble work.

“A Ballad” is scored as a beautiful chorale complete with such effects as moving internal voices, dense low-register voicing with altered pitches, and contrary motion. The complete form features an original chord progression and is a unique 42-bar AABA structure. The cadence of the first 12-bar A section is elided and therefore also serves as the opening bar of the repeat of the A section. These twenty-three bars are followed by an eight-bar bridge over which Mulligan plays an attractively poignant baritone solo. The cadence of the closing A section is elided as well and serves as the opening bar of the second chorus. Welding notes that “Listeners familiar with the [Miles Davis] Nonet’s recording of ‘Moon Dreams’ will notice strong parallels [with] its clear influence from Gil Evans’ distinctive approach to orchestration.”⁵²⁵ Klinkowitz observes that that the arrangement’s “foggy ensemble sound is itself played like a piano, another example of Mulligan following the Duke Ellington practice of playing his orchestra like a keyboard. This control allows his solo horn to slip in and out of its orchestral frame like a figure in the mist.”⁵²⁶

“Ontet” is based on the shout chorus melody that Mulligan wrote for his Davis Nonet arrangement of Wallington’s “Godchild.” As mentioned above, he recorded “Godchild” himself with a trio (because pianist Jimmy Rowles was missing in action for the session leaving Mulligan with Red Mitchell on bass and Chico Hamilton on drums) on June 10, 1952, at Phil Turetsky’s house. This was the version of the song

⁵²⁵ Ibid.

⁵²⁶ Klinkowitz, 77.

that begins with the shout chorus melody rather than with the melody Wallington wrote. For the Tentette, Mulligan eliminates Wallington's melody altogether and renames the tune "Ontet." As with the trio version, Mulligan takes the lead on piano. His piano playing is so much more engaging when he uses a locked-hand style (as he does on this number to introduce the theme), rather than attempting to play horn-like lines with comping as he did on "Takin' a Chance on Love." Mulligan is very adept at creating interesting voicing, and he demonstrates this on "Ontet" with all ten fingers. He keeps an aptly balanced dialogue on piano with the rest of the ensemble throughout the performance of the song. The bright timbre of the piano is a nice contrast to the low-register ensemble work. Bob Enevoldsen on valve trombone has a short solo, one of the few on the album performed by someone other than Mulligan or Baker. His agility and distinctive timbre foreshadow Mulligan's later longstanding collaboration with Bob Brookmeyer.

Even though the Tentette never became a fulltime venture for Mulligan, in retrospect, he mostly admired his work on this album.

That one album came out very well. I've always been kind of pleased with that, especially keeping in mind that we didn't have the possibilities at that period of either over-dubbing, or inter-cutting to any great extent. We didn't have much rehearsal time, and often there wasn't that much recording time. There were a couple of three hour sessions and I had a certain number of things that had to be done and by God, they had to be done whether there were mistakes or not. And there are weak places and mistakes in playing in a few places that bug me when I hear it. I think mostly that when people hear it, they don't probably see that there's anything wrong. I handled it, I had to go, I had no choice. You can't always be idealistic about those things if you want to get it done.⁵²⁷

⁵²⁷ Mulligan, oral history.

The Tentette was one of the most artistically successful of Mulligan's many ventures. With it, he was able to blend the delicacy of the Quartet's sound with the complexities of his writing for larger ensembles. The sounds strike an effective balance between intimacy on the one hand, and swing feeling (when it was desired) on the other. Mulligan also shows that he can make his compositions assume new identities when he re-engineers them to fit ensembles of different instrumentations. It is unfortunate that the Tentette recorded only eight numbers, a situation that was probably forced because of the unusual agreement between Mulligan, Norman, and Capitol. It is also unfortunate that, as with the Davis Nonet, the Tentette recordings initially failed to attract a large admiring audience.

Pianoless Quintet with Lee Konitz

Well, I did an arrangement for “All The Things You Are” that I was very pleased with. It was a great sounding band. Some of the stuff in that is just gorgeous, beautiful sounding ensemble things. And Lee [Konitz] played really well on it; we loved the stuff he did.⁵²⁸

Lee Konitz was born in Chicago the same year as Mulligan (1927). As a child, he studied classical clarinet with a member of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra until switching to tenor saxophone. By 1945, he played well enough to briefly replace Charlie Ventura in guitarist Teddy Powell’s big band. Konitz remembers: “I had all the hot solos on tenor. . . . When I stood up to play on my first gig, I was told that Teddy walked off the stage and started banging his head against the wall.”⁵²⁹ Konitz eventually switched to alto sax and worked on and off for clarinetist Jerry Wald until 1947.

That year Konitz met Mulligan when the two of them worked for Claude Thornhill. Konitz, like Mulligan, acknowledges the significance of Gil Evans’ influence on the Thornhill sound. He remembers:

The thing about that [Thornhill] band that is most important, I suppose, in this whole transitional period, is that Gil [Evans] was, in fact, teaching the men how to play bebop. That was the music—the bands before that I had played in certainly weren’t playing anything resembling that kind of music. This was a totally new experience. . . . So many musicians were into the new music and interested in playing it. Even the sidemen in some of the most commercial bands were, on their own, trying to play it and listening to it in total absorption.⁵³⁰

Konitz recalls his initial positive impressions of Mulligan as a composer/arranger in the Thornhill organization:

⁵²⁸ Mulligan, oral history.

⁵²⁹ Jack, 122.

⁵³⁰ Gitler, *Swing to Bop*, 249-50.

[Thornhill] had excellent arrangements by Gil Evans and Gerry Mulligan, and Gerry of course was mainly a writer then. His charts were great, and I also played his music with Stan Kenton, and those pieces were some of my favorites, because he really knew how to write for saxophones.⁵³¹

Later, when Miles Davis wanted bopist Sonny Stitt on alto saxophone in his Nonet, Mulligan convinced him that, given the sound they were after, the lighter sounding Konitz would be a better choice. Konitz not only credits Mulligan, rather than Davis, as the central figure in the Nonet, but he also downplays the general perception of Davis as the founder of the cool jazz movement.

The Nonet was an arranger's band because they rehearsed the music. Miles made some suggestions, but very few that I recall; I thought of it as Gerry's band really. What really concerns me is the way the band has been called "The Birth of the Cool," which I think is a little off. The Nonet was a chamber ensemble where the solos were incidental to the writing, which was the most important aspect. The real "Birth of the Cool" for me was Lennie Tristano's music.⁵³²

Mulligan is quoted as agreeing with Konitz: "As far as the 'birth of the cool' is concerned, I think Lennie is much more responsible than the Miles dates. It's hard to say it's unemotional, because it's not exactly that, but there was coolness about his whole approach in terms of the dynamic level."⁵³³ It was through his association with Tristano as both a student and sideman in the late 1940s that Konitz's mature style emerged. His technical facility and command of the saxophone was superlative. Konitz's style reflected a light, dry, and airy sound, often in the instrument's high register with little vibrato and almost no staccato. His influence can be heard later in

⁵³¹ Jack, 122.

⁵³² Ibid., 123.

⁵³³ Gitler, *Swing to Bop*, 302.

the alto saxophone playing of Bud Shank, Art Pepper, and Paul Desmond. He was one of the few alto saxophonists of the 40s and 50s to retain a distinctive sound while others were attempting to emulate Charlie Parker. Konitz remembers his early thinking about Parker:

Charlie Parker of course was the major influence on alto, but it wasn't difficult for me to avoid, since temperamentally that music didn't really get to me. It was more intense than I was able to identify with at the time, but eventually I decided that was all ego and I was missing the greatest alto player who had ever lived. I started to learn his music without adopting his whole vocabulary, because it is such a temptation to play all those nice melodies like everyone else did, but I had other stimuli.⁵³⁴

Hodier observes that in general, cool musicians such as Konitz prefer Lester Young's conception of melody and rhythm to that of Charlie Parker's. He particularly singles out Konitz to demonstrate his point.

As for Lee Konitz, who has brilliant gifts, he is more an explorer than an inspired artist, although he occasionally tries to use a technique of accentuation rather like Bird's, he falls back at the first opportunity into a regular pattern in which the strong beats are like immovable posts. There is a hundred times more rhythmic richness in Parker's solo based on "What is this Thing Called Love? (Hot House)" than in the version that [Konitz] has given of the same theme ("Subconscious-Lee").⁵³⁵

Konitz and Mulligan would cross paths again when they both worked for Stan Kenton in 1952. Konitz had always admired Kenton and was excited to join his organization. He remembers:

I recall seeing and hearing Stan at the Oriental Theater in Chicago when I was in my early teens and being thrilled by the power of the sound and the sight of this beautiful band with the magical instruments, and this giant of a man leading them. And after I joined

⁵³⁴ Jack, 124.

⁵³⁵ Andre Hodeir, *The Andre Hodeir Jazz Reader* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006), 78.

the band, I still had that feeling—he was still a giant to me and the power of the band was really impressive to me. Plus, when I joined the band in 1952, Stan said he was interested in playing straight ahead jazz, and I appreciated that.⁵³⁶

Konitz was a prominent member of the Kenton organization in the early 1950s and was often featured as a soloist. His rendition of “Lover Man” with the Orchestra is a particularly impressive demonstration of his unique talent.

Even though Kenton toured often, whenever the Orchestra was in Los Angeles between tours, Konitz would take every opportunity to sit in with the Mulligan Quartet at the Haig. Eventually Konitz recorded with the ensemble. He remembers:

I was working with Stan Kenton [at the Palladium] in Hollywood, and Gerry was working at a club [the Haig] with Chet. He invited me to join them, so on the off nights—Mondays—I did. Gerry was very encouraging, and he wrote these very charming arrangements for three horns. Some very nice pieces resulted, and then we went to the home of the bass player, Joe Mondragon, and recorded some more tunes. I didn't really want the extended pieces featuring me released—there are some good things in them, in the spirit of “jazz is not the perfect art”—but I loved the organized pieces very much. At the club, Gerry asked me to play a featured tune sometimes, and he and Richard Bock of Pacific Jazz decided to use it on the album. I would have liked to have been able to do that more. It was a very nice combination of instruments, and Gerry was such an ingenious orchestrator—and Chet was the all-American boy. . . . I think [not having a piano was] a very musical setup.⁵³⁷

Konitz's objection to the release of the “extended pieces featuring me” is further expressed in another interview when he says, “On my recordings with the quartet, I actually rejected ‘Too Marvelous for Words’ because it didn't seem to fit

⁵³⁶ Lee, 162.

⁵³⁷ Andy Hamilton, *Lee Konitz: Conversations on the Improvisor's Art* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007), 101.

into Gerry's context."⁵³⁸ Konitz much preferred the "very charming arrangements for three horns" which more aptly reflected Mulligan's writing skills and the style of the Quartet. Despite Konitz's protest, "Too Marvelous for Words" plus four other old standards ("Lover Man," "I'll Remember April," "These Foolish Things," and "All the Things You Are") featuring Konitz with the Quartet (Mulligan, Baker, Smith, and Bunker) were recorded live by Bock at the Haig and released on side B of *Lee Konitz Plays with the Gerry Mulligan Quartet* (World Pacific PJM-406).

As Klinkowitz notes in his discography, there is confusion concerning when these recording sessions actually occurred. While the Mosaic liner notes speculate that "the first week of June seems most likely,"⁵³⁹ the World Pacific issue lists January 25, 1953. Klinkowitz claims that "others suggest June and are supported by aural evidence plus the memory of producer Richard Bock, who recorded the date."⁵⁴⁰ Konitz remembers that he began sitting in with the Quartet "when the Kenton band was at the Palladium in Los Angeles."⁵⁴¹ Kenton biographer William Lee reports that the Kenton Orchestra performed regularly at the Palladium in January 1953.⁵⁴²

These five live recordings were clearly meant to be Konitz features with Mulligan and Baker contributing only by playing simple and understated background figures (some were likely not prearranged). Because Mulligan thought that he and

⁵³⁸ Jack, 125.

⁵³⁹ *The Complete Pacific and Capitol Recordings of the Original Gerry Mulligan Quartet and Tentette with Chet Baker*.

⁵⁴⁰ Klinkowitz, 242.

⁵⁴¹ Jack, 124.

⁵⁴² Lee, 165.

Baker were not at their best on the live date, he initially felt that the material should not be released.⁵⁴³ He changed his mind because of the high quality of Konitz's playing. Konitz, freed from Stan Kenton, is spontaneous and inventive, providing all sorts of new ideas about these old standards. He is particularly brilliant on "Too Marvelous for Words," ironically the tune he did not want released. These sides not only reflect superb performances by the alto saxophonist, but they provide an interesting perspective of Mulligan's skill in integrating a player of Konitz's caliber into such a tightly knit group.

Side A of *Lee Konitz Plays with the Gerry Mulligan Quartet* contains five, as Konitz had put it, "charming [Mulligan] arrangements for three horns [plus bass and drums]," which were recorded at two June sessions at Phil Turetsky's house. Konitz erroneously said that the sessions were at Mondragon's house perhaps because Mondragon replaced Smith on the second session. The songs recorded were "Almost Like Being in Love," "Sextet," and "Broadway" on the first session; "I Can't Believe That you're in Love with Me" and "Lady Be Good" were subsequently recorded with Mondragon on bass later in June. Of the album's ten songs, "Sextet" is the only Mulligan original. Klinkowitz again reports that there is disagreement as to whether the sessions actually occurred in January or in June. "Mosaic lists January or June, but an errata sheet specifies 23 and 30 January and 1 February."⁵⁴⁴ One would think that if the sessions did occur in January, Mulligan would have considered using

⁵⁴³ Jack, 127.

⁵⁴⁴ Klinkowitz, 242.

Konitz rather than the less experienced Shank on the Tentette sessions as well, unless perhaps Konitz's commitment with Kenton at the Palladium would have prevented it.

Klinkowitz comments on how Mulligan's treatment of this quintet's instrumentation is a precursor to the sound of his successful ensemble of 1955:

What these [arrangements] have in common are features that would in just more than two years distinguish the Gerry Mulligan Sextet: an ensemble in which each horn's distinctive voice was placed within a range allowing it at once to be itself and contribute to a solid sound, a rousing sense of melody at beginning and end (in the Dixieland strut tradition), plus the even more characteristic Dixieland technique of spontaneous polyphony among the horns as a way of inducing a bit of comic disorder before gathering the twisting and turning marchers for a more uniform direction at the end.⁵⁴⁵

Of the five arrangements, Mulligan's finest is his own "Sextet," in that it best demonstrates Konitz's view of Mulligan as an "ingenious orchestrator." Mulligan uncharacteristically scores all three horns in their respective low registers. The introduction to this uptempo 32-bar AABA form is a syncopated call-and-response fanfare between the horns in an appealingly dissonant voicing and the bass. The form kicks off with the trumpet taking the melody while the two saxophones alternate between harmonizing the melody, providing chordal accompaniment, and playing countermelodies. Mulligan, Baker, and Konitz then each take solo choruses (accompanied only by bass and drums), with Mulligan's solo being the weakest of the three. Perhaps accompanying figures by the other two horns would have helped. The out chorus begins with each horn playing a different line (Klinkowitz's "spontaneous polyphony") until by the end of the chorus, the lines merge into the three-part harmony ending.

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid., 80.

“I Can’t Believe that You’re in Love with Me,” written in 1927 by Jimmy McHugh and Clarence Gaskill, was recorded by Louis Armstrong and his Orchestra in 1930. Mulligan’s version of this AABA form for the Quartet with Konitz is more connected to Armstrong’s style of the 1920s than is this big band release of just a little later. Mulligan emulates the collective improvisation of the New Orleans style by having Baker take the traditional trumpet role of playing the melody, scoring ornamental higher figures formerly typical for the clarinet for Konitz, and giving himself a lower register counter melody as was usually the role of the trombone in early jazz. At the end of each repetition of the A section, the horns come together in modern-voiced three-part harmony. The bridge is a syncopated section with the three voices moving in parallel. Mulligan succeeds in this rather neoclassical approach of integrating traditional jazz style in a more modern setting.

Konitz participated in a Mulligan project again in December 1957 when World Pacific Records (formerly Bock’s Pacific Jazz) commissioned Bill Holman to arrange six Mulligan originals (“Four and One Moore,” “Turnstile,” “Sextet,” “Disc Jockey Jump,” “Venus de Milo,” and “Revelation”) for five saxophones (Konitz on alto, Allen Eager on alto and tenor, Zoot Sims on tenor, Al Cohn on tenor and baritone, and Mulligan on baritone) plus guitar (Freddie Green), bass (Henry Grimes), and drums (Dave Bailey). It is no surprise that Mulligan selected Holman to write the arrangements since Holman, according to a number of his contemporaries, was strongly influenced by Mulligan’s writing during Mulligan’s tenure with the Kenton band.⁵⁴⁶

⁵⁴⁶ Liner notes to *The Gerry Mulligan Songbook, Vol. 1*.

This project demonstrates the staying power of Mulligan compositions which date all the way back to 1947. He had originally written “Four and One Moore” for the April 1949 Prestige session for five tenor saxophonists: Stan Getz, Zoot Sims, Allen Eager, Al Cohn and Brew Moore. The original title of “Turnstile” was “Gold Rush,” which was originally recorded for Savoy by the Brew Moore Septet in May 1949. Mulligan changed the name to “Turnstile” when he arranged and recorded it with the Baker-Mulligan Quartet for Fantasy. “Sextet” was originally recorded live at the Haig in January 1953 by the Mulligan Quartet with Lee Konitz. “Disc Jockey Jump,” originally recorded by Gene Krupa in January 1947, was one of Mulligan’s first arrangements to gain acclaim among musicians. “Venus de Milo” was one of the seven works of Mulligan to be recorded by the Miles Davis Nonet for Capitol in April 1949. And “Revelation,” written for Elliott Lawrence in 1948 or 1949, was later recorded by Teddy Charles and Bob Brookmeyer for Prestige in January 1954, and by Chet Baker (without Mulligan) for Pacific Jazz in July 1956.

The resulting album of the 1957 project, *The Gerry Mulligan Songbook, Vol. I* (World Pacific PJ-1237) also included a new Mulligan original, “Crazy Day” which he arranged himself. Without any trumpets on the session Mulligan and Holman found it necessary to include guitarist Freddie Green in the rhythm section which Klinkowitz says added “a crispness to the beat that otherwise might have melted beneath the saxes’ sweetness.”⁵⁴⁷ Mulligan was pleased with Freddie Green's contribution to the session in that, in addition to the crisp sound Freddie gave to a rhythm section, his presence “seemed to center the tonality. It made a range for the

⁵⁴⁷ Klinkowitz, 116.

bass to play in so that the intonation was much more clear-cut. Intonation seems to be a problem for the bass sometime in playing without the piano.”⁵⁴⁸

After the 1953 Konitz sessions, the Mulligan Pianoless Quartet continued to record and perform at the Haig until the strain in the relationship between Baker and Mulligan worsened. The circumstances eventually caused their association to unravel, and Mulligan, not Baker, ended up paying the price.

⁵⁴⁸ Liner notes to *The Gerry Mulligan Songbook, Vol. 1*.

Sheriff's Honor Farm Band

And Chet liked to drive fast. He liked fast cars and I guess, as soon as we made some money at the Haig he immediately went out and bought a Jaguar. During the period we were together, from the time we started rehearsals and played the off nights, I think he went through three or four cars. They usually wound up smashed somewhere and it's a wonder that he wasn't killed, he and his wife both. . . . He finally was in so much debt with all of these cars that he had smashed up and owed on, that he and his wife didn't have any place to stay. By this time, I had a little house in Hollywood, kind of nice little conventional house in a nice conventional neighborhood. It was comfortable. So, I let them stay there for awhile, hoping that he would get himself on his feet and get his own place because I didn't really like living with people too much. Well, not only did Chet move in, but I've now got his whole pack hanging out every day at my house. I said, "Chet, I appreciate all these guys are friends of yours, but I really can't live with four, five, six, seven, eight guys under foot, man. I just can't deal with that." So, what they wound up doing is they'd wait until we went to work [at the Haig], and then they'd come and hang out there until they knew it was time for us to come home. I didn't even know about this.⁵⁴⁹

At about the time as his marriage to Jeffie Lee Boyd, Mulligan was trying in vain to kick the heroin habit. After consulting several doctors, one of them suggested that he turn himself in to the police, an idea that he rejected because "I couldn't see how I could be cured in jail."⁵⁵⁰ The situation was exacerbated after Baker and his entourage moved in, especially since Baker had previously gotten in trouble with marijuana.

Chet always had a thing going with this one narcotics cop who was a pain in the neck. He liked to ride Chet, and Chet liked to ride him back again. They had this whole kind of contentious relationship going on and I kept telling Chet, "Let's cool it with this guy because he could make a lot of trouble. I mean, after all, you are carrying pot around and we're a little bit vulnerable around here. So, it'd be a good idea to cool it." He kept on with it. . . . Well, because these guys in his pack were

⁵⁴⁹ Mulligan, oral history.

⁵⁵⁰ Nat Hentoff, "Profiles, 'In the Mainstream: Gerry Mulligan – II,'" *The New Yorker*, March 28, 1959: 62.

spending time at the house every night when we weren't there, and the neighborhood sees it all. God knows, I guess they were playing loud music and smoking pot all over the place. . . . So, I come home from the gig one night with Chet, and the police are there.⁵⁵¹

This account from Mulligan's oral history is consistent with his 1959 Hentoff interview for *The New Yorker*. Carson Smith, however, reports that two plainclothes detectives actually confronted and searched the entire Quartet at the Haig after their performance and before they went home. Smith recalls:

One night, two plainclothes detectives named Hill and O'Grady came into the Haig and sat down right in front of the bandstand for two whole sets. Chet pulled me aside and told me they were cops and Hollywood was their beat. Their great fame came from busting celebrities like Robert Mitchum and Lenny Bruce, and let me add, they were a couple of assholes. If the club hadn't been full, they would have arrested us there and then, but they waited until a quarter to two, when it was time to close the joint up. They herded us into the office and looked up our sleeves, checking for needle marks. I was bewildered, because I didn't know what they were talking about, but after checking Chet, Larry [Bunker], and me, Gerry just broke down, saying, "I've been screwing around with drugs again," just like that. . . . He took the cops to the house that he and Chet were renting in east Hollywood near Sunset Boulevard and Western.⁵⁵²

After raiding the house and finding several marijuana cigarettes, Mulligan and Baker were stripped and searched. "Everybody denied ownership of the pot, man."⁵⁵³ The marks on Mulligan's arms indicated to the police that he had been taking heroin, so they searched the house for the drug, but none was found. Mulligan, believing that he would be sent to the federal hospital in Lexington, Kentucky for a cure, led the police to the heroin that he had buried in the back yard. He also took the blame for

⁵⁵¹ Mulligan, oral history.

⁵⁵² Jack, 169-70.

⁵⁵³ Mulligan, oral history.

the marijuana believing that the case against him could not get any worse than it already was.

When Mulligan and Baker appeared at their hearing in April 1953, the judge observed that Mulligan was the least credible witness that he had ever seen in court. Jeffie Boyd said, “At that time, you could push Gerry in any direction, except musically. In every other way, he was like a lost ship.”⁵⁵⁴ Baker was acquitted of all charges, but Mulligan was released on bail until September. “Chet got himself a sharp lawyer. I, unfortunately, got a really dumb lawyer. Supposedly, it was my fault because I’m the older guy. I led him astray.”⁵⁵⁵ At the time, the California legislature was considering passing a law that would permit first-time drug offenders to go on probation without jail time. Mulligan’s lawyer, believing that at worst, Mulligan would be sentenced to only one or two years probation, encouraged him to continue performing at the Haig.

Several years earlier in New York, before he met Gail Madden, Mulligan had come close to marrying Arlyne Brown, the daughter of songwriter Lew Brown.⁵⁵⁶ “We were good friends in New York, and she was friends with a lot of people that I knew. She was kind of on that scene and had a lot of connections with the music scene. She had been married previously to a musician, so she knew all the players

⁵⁵⁴ Hentoff, “Profiles II,” 62.

⁵⁵⁵ Mulligan, oral history.

⁵⁵⁶ Lew Brown (1893-1958), born Louis Brownstein in Odessa, Russia, was a lyricist for several Tin Pan Alley songwriters including Harold Arlen, Con Conrad, and Albert Von Tilzer. He is best known for his work with the songwriting team that also included Ray Henderson and Buddy De Sylva. The trio wrote the scores for numerous Broadway shows, including *George White’s Scandals* (1925, 1926, 1928, 1931), *Good News* (1927), and *Hold Everything!* (1928).

with the bands.”⁵⁵⁷ Despite the fact that they had stopped seeing each other after she was frightened off by his drug addiction, Arlyne continued to closely follow Mulligan’s career. After hearing of his arrest in 1953, she flew to California, and Mulligan met her at the airport. Carson Smith recalls, “It seemed that within a matter of days, Arlyne had taken over and become Gerry’s manager, with the intention of showing him the way to a new life. She was a real New Yorker and, man, was she strong that woman!”⁵⁵⁸ Gerry and Arlyne married on May 8, 1953.

Mulligan appeared in court again in September, at which time he was sentenced to six months in prison plus three years’ probation. He was released after three and a half months thanks to the efforts of the new attorneys Arlyne had retained and a man named Joe Crunk, a former police officer who had started a Narcotics Anonymous group in Los Angeles.

Mulligan’s time in prison was an awful experience for him as he recounted to Hentoff in 1959 and later recorded in his oral history of 1995. He initially went into isolation for a week apparently because he had been arrested as an addict and had been out on bail. “I was only mildly addicted when I went in, and while I was sick the first week in jail, that was due more to isolation than to the effects of withdrawal. The cops, though, interpreted my being sick as the result of having had to kick the drug, which indicates how astute they were as observers of narcotics patients.”⁵⁵⁹

⁵⁵⁷ Mulligan, oral history.

⁵⁵⁸ Jack, 169.

⁵⁵⁹Hentoff, “Profiles II,” 62-4.

After about two weeks, Mulligan was transferred to the Wayside Honor Rancho, a low-to-medium security work farm near Castaic, operated by the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. Captain Ambrose Stewart, the prison's commanding officer in 1956, described the facility as follows:

Today, this modern correctional institution is situated in the center of a 2,900 acre rancho, located 42 miles northwest of Los Angeles Civic Center. It now houses over 1,300 inmates with a paid personnel of 176 employees. Three degrees of security are maintained; Minimum Security of 750 honor-type inmates who work in agriculture, maintenance and other activities requiring a minimum of supervision; a Segregated Minimum Security of 350—inmates in this segregated compound are heroin addicts or peddlers. They are kept isolated from the other inmates to minimize the possibility of recruiting new narcotic prospects upon release. A dormitory and two cell-blocks hold 200 men in Maximum Security. These inmates are not considered proper custodial risks for Minimum Security-type incarceration.⁵⁶⁰

Mulligan recalls his experience there: "I began in the minimum security compound, and the first week I went out with the work crews. There was a great, arid piece of land loaded with rocks that we had to clear out. I did an awful job. One of the guards, however, was a jazz fan, and he and the captain soon descended on me to write music for shows the inmates would put on at Thanksgiving and Christmas." Mulligan welcomed the opportunity to be involved in any musical activity, and within a week, he was made "housemother," a position of respectability in the barracks. "You had to keep the place clean. Prisoners didn't usually attain this high social status until they'd been there quite a while. I'd get through my duties and go over to the recreation hall to work on music. I wrote a couple of arrangements for the prison band, and rehearsed it a couple of times a week."

⁵⁶⁰ Ambrose Stewart, *Los Angeles County Employee Magazine*, Feb 1956.

One of the guards was not particularly happy with Mulligan's getting this preferential treatment. "He was waiting for me to slip. I was late one morning getting to breakfast on the early shift, to which the housemothers were assigned. That guard told me to go back and eat with the regular shift. I mumbled something not especially friendly, and he marched me down to the sergeant's office." The result was Mulligan's transfer to the maximum security facility.

"For nineteen or twenty days, I went through the inferno. It was a fantastic experience. I'd been working on music and was in a highly charged state of mind, and also I'd been having a fair amount of freedom. Now I was stuck in a cell about four feet wide and six feet long with two other guys." Mulligan described one of his cellmates as "a funny little Mexican guy. He was one of these people who was full of stories, and he told stories endlessly. So, it was like being locked up with a Mexican raconteur, you know." There were only two bunks in the cell, so the three prisoners had to take turns sleeping on the floor. They were given only two partial meals a day and were permitted no mail delivery, no visitors, and nothing to read. Any time a guard entered the cell, the prisoners were required to jump up and stand at attention. They were allowed to shower once a week and spent the rest of the time in the cell, which contained the two bunks, a toilet, and a sink.

"The first couple days, I flipped periodically, banging my head against the wall. Then I finally fell into a how-long-can-it-go-on desperation. It was sheer torture. There was nothing I could do. I was absolutely helpless. In time, I just got numb." One of the guards who observed Mulligan's behavior tried to get the captain in charge of 'care and treatment' to give him some privileges, but the captain

refrained from giving him any additional preference, thinking that he would behave badly. Mulligan was surprised that through all this maltreatment, even with all the hostility that he felt, he couldn't blame the guards. "That was the way the system was. They were doing their career work, and didn't really know the effects of the system they were part of or that the job was an outlet for the sadistic side of their temperaments. I finally found out that the way the brand of torture that was being applied to me works is, that if you can come to stand it, your time is less."

His time in maximum security was finally diminished through the intercession of jazz promoter Gene Norman, who happened to be a friend of the sheriff's. Norman and Joe Crunk, who would later be instrumental in convincing the judge to reduce Mulligan's sentence, had been the only people allowed to see him. Norman proposed to feature Mulligan in a concert, after he (Norman) had obtained permission for Mulligan to be taken to the concert by guards and returned to jail immediately afterward. "I could just see the advertisements for the thing: One day only, on leave from the Los Angeles County Penal System doing a one-nighter! The management that brought you a great deal of trouble and expense! Fresh from a tour of [Castaic], California! . . . I turned the offer down. It was more than I could face." Despite rejection of the idea, he was soon released from maximum security. "I put the experience out of my mind as quickly as I could, but in some ways I expect I'll never recover from those nineteen or twenty days."

For several more weeks, Mulligan went back to working on the road gangs, primarily picking up rocks. He was brought before the judge again, and after Crunk's testimony on Mulligan's behalf, his sentence was reduced to the time served. He was released on December 24, 1953. "I couldn't really believe it. I still had just over two

and a half years of probation, and that ended in 1956. My probation was to Joe Crunk, in addition to the regular authorities.” Even though he was permitted to leave California to tour, Mulligan was required to mail in a written report of his activities once a month.

You usually have to stay in the environment that helped cause your addiction. It’s illuminating—or should be—that the first thing many guys want to do when they get out of jail on a narcotics sentence is to get back on narcotics. It’s an ineffectual but deeply hostile gesture of protest against the stupidity that got them in jail to begin with.⁵⁶¹

⁵⁶¹ Hentoff, “Profiles II,” 62-8.

Transition: 1954 - 1959

I've got to work at getting back the habits that are part of writing, the thought habits that used to allow me to average three to four weeks an arrangement and to stay on it.⁵⁶²

After his Christmas Eve release, Mulligan's initial intention was to continue leading the Quartet, but after an almost immediate financial squabble with Baker, he decided to form a new group.

So, Arlyne and I were walking down Hollywood Boulevard, I guess that night [Christmas Eve]—first night out [of prison] and walking around all bright-eyed and bushy-tailed. And wouldn't you know it, walking towards us on Hollywood Boulevard is Chet Baker and some of his gang. And Chet came up to us and, I swear, he never said, "Hello", or "It's great to see you," or "Gerry, geez I didn't know that you were out," or anything. He came up, and the first thing he said was, "Gerry, I've decided I've got to have \$300 a week," and I laughed. I mean, it was so outrageously off the mark and inappropriate, you know. And it just struck me so funny that I laughed, and Chet never could figure out what I was laughing at; he couldn't understand it. But in a funny way, I kind of heaved a sigh of relief because, as much as it meant musically to have a group with Chet, I realized that by being on the road with a group that was travelling by cars, I would be sweating blood all the time. Because if Chet was driving, and even worse, if one of the guys that were travelling with him. . .⁵⁶³

Baker later told *Coda* magazine that he was perfectly justified in his request, especially since he had won the 1953 *Downbeat* Jazz Poll for his instrument (Mulligan also won despite being incarcerated for three and a half months!)

All I wanted was \$300 a week and he started laughing like I was asking for something outrageous. Up to this point, all I was making was \$120 a week, six nights a week. So that was the end of the group. Our original band never went on tour. . . . I worked for him for eleven months without asking for a raise, but after we both won the polls, I

⁵⁶² Mulligan quoted in Nat Hentoff, "Counterpoint," *Downbeat*, April 20, 1955: 30.

⁵⁶³ Mulligan, oral history.

figured Jesus, it's time to get a little more bread. He was really kind of shitty about that.⁵⁶⁴

Mulligan explains why it would not have been feasible to meet Baker's demand:

I was able to get \$1,250 a week for the band [at the Haig] and the expenses that I had to pay out of that—the commission to the agent, which was a minimum of 10% and was often 15%. And I had to pay transportation costs, and I had to pay the taxes and let's see, what else...And salary, whatever that was. By the time you get all this stuff added up, man, there's not a hell of a lot of it left. So, that's why I was laughing. I mean \$1,250 for the band and Chet's asking for \$300; it may have been \$400. I'm sure it must have been \$300, which in those days was a big salary. The best-paid player in a band like Tommy Dorsey's or Harry James's was \$300-350 a week for a really great lead trumpet player. So, that was a lot of money.⁵⁶⁵

So, on the very day that Mulligan was released from the Honor Farm, the partnership that had overnight vaulted both him and Baker to national fame abruptly ended. The next formal collaboration between the two would not be until 1957 when Dick Bock got them together to record *Reunion* (World Pacific PJ-1241) with Henry Grimes on bass and Dave Bailey on drums. Baker and Mulligan would perform together again at Carnegie Hall on November 24, 1974, in a Mulligan-led septet including Bob James on piano, Ron Carter on bass, John Scofield on guitar, Dave Samuels on vibraphone/percussion, and Harvey Mason on Drums. The *New York Times* review that appeared two days after this Carnegie Hall concert compared the respective performances of Mulligan and Baker. It called attention to Baker's, not Mulligan's, history of drug problems.

The two musicians have traveled very different paths in the last two decades. Mr. Mulligan, leading various small groups and a big band

⁵⁶⁴ Bob Rosenblum, "Chet Baker (interview)," *Coda*, Sept./Oct. 1977: 7.

⁵⁶⁵ Mulligan, oral history. By 1958, as reported in "Profiles II," Mulligan's quartet was averaging \$2,500 to \$3,000 a week, or \$1,000 a night.

and as a co-star with Dave Brubeck, has grown steadily and is firmly established as a jazz virtuoso of the very first rank. Mr. Baker, on the other hand, has had to fight his way out of an involvement in drugs and is only now beginning to realize the potential of the career that started with Mr. Mulligan's quartet. . . . On his own, Mr. Mulligan played a set that was full of the mixture of the lyricism and the deep, swinging power that have become his hallmarks. Mr. Baker, in his set, showed that he has developed more range and assertiveness within the wistfully ruminative style with which he has always been associated. . . . The program also included a typically polished and calculatedly dramatic performance by Stan Getz and his quartet.⁵⁶⁶

After the 1953 split-up, Dave Brubeck and Paul Desmond recommended Dick Collins to Mulligan as a replacement for Baker, but Collins was not available.

Mulligan then contacted valve trombonist Bob Brookmeyer, who was in New York, and asked him to come out to California with some good New York musicians to rehearse for a new band. So Brookmeyer, drummer Frank Isola, and bassist Bill Anthony arrived a week after Mulligan's release from prison. The new quartet made its first appearance at the Embassy Theater in Los Angeles. Mulligan recalls, "We wound up with a full house and it was really quite an evening. It was so exciting that some fans stole a couple of the books, including mine, and it was at that point that we started to be more careful with the music."⁵⁶⁷ Klinkowitz observes that "Brookmeyer spent his first dates with the Quartet not only sticking to the trumpet parts in the old 1952-1953 arrangements, but even playing Baker's recorded solos note for note."⁵⁶⁸

After a short engagement in San Francisco, the Quartet hit the road, playing first in Philadelphia, and then at the famed Storyville club in Boston. "That's when I

⁵⁶⁶ John S. Wilson, "Mulligan, Baker in Jazz Reunion," *The New York Times*, November 26, 1974: 31.

⁵⁶⁷ Jack, 147-48.

⁵⁶⁸ Klinkowitz, 83.

met [jazz promoter] George Wein, [founder of the Newport Jazz Festival], and all of his gang. . . . For whatever reason, people responded very well to [the Quartet]. It was kind of an instant acceptance wherever we went.”⁵⁶⁹ While in Boston, Mulligan signed a contract with the Associated Booking Company, then the largest jazz agency in America, and became one of ABC’s most important talents. ABC had been formed in 1940 by Louis Armstrong and his manager Joe Glaser. The agency had represented such artists as Billie Holiday, Ethel Waters, Duke Ellington, Les Brown and the Band of Renown, Andy Kirk and the Clouds of Joy, Benny Goodman, Lionel Hampton, Woody Herman, and Dave Brubeck.

Regarding the Mulligan Quartet’s engagement at Storyville, Bob Martin reported that “the club had one of the most comfortably swinging weeks in the club’s history. For such a lazy-looking exponent of jazz, Mulligan has accomplished more than he feels he is capable of absorbing at this point in his career.”⁵⁷⁰ In this interview with Martin, Mulligan begins to allude to the fact he has not been writing enough new material lately. “We’ve recorded enough for three years. The originals that I have written have all appeared on the scene at once. I feel as though the well could run a little dry. Seems like everything I wrote went to press. It’s quite a spin to be in.”⁵⁷¹ Despite these concerns, Mulligan was happy with the way the Quartet sounded at Storyville. “Bobby [Brookmeyer] gets a sound that’s much closer to mine

⁵⁶⁹ Mulligan, oral history.

⁵⁷⁰ Bob Martin, “Pipe-and-Slipper Jazz is for Me: Gerry Mulligan,” *Downbeat*, May 19, 1954: 2.

⁵⁷¹ *Ibid.*

than what the trumpet did. The group is closer to what I want than it has ever been.”⁵⁷²

Arlyne served as Mulligan’s business manager for the next five years until the couple’s separation.

I think the thing that happened with Arlyne was that she very much wanted to help me and did help me, but we weren’t able to help each other. You know, after the initial phase was over with, when it came to living together and trying to function together, we just didn’t know how to do it. I hate the idea of fighting, but because I have a temper, it’s so easy for me to get angry at things. So, it’s like once you establish this atmosphere of war, it’s like it never went away.⁵⁷³

In 1957, Gerry and Arlyne did have a son, Reed Brown Mulligan, who lived with his mother in New York after the marriage ended.

New York was the one city that Mulligan avoided for the next several years, not because Arlyne was there, but because of a city regulation that was a great source of annoyance for him and for his booking office. The regulation stipulated that anyone performing in a cabaret or dance hall where liquor is sold must obtain a permit from the licensing division of the police department. Since Mulligan was arrested twice on narcotics charges, he was also required to produce several affidavits from character witnesses and a doctor’s statement certifying that he was no longer an addict. He began collecting the necessary documents several times, but each time he gave up in disgust, thinking that the procedure was just too humiliating. He also

⁵⁷² Ibid.

⁵⁷³ Mulligan, oral history.

believed that the regulation was unconstitutional since it further penalized musicians who had already served sentences.⁵⁷⁴

Mulligan eventually freed himself from his drug addiction. In 1959, he told Hentoff:

I haven't used heroin now for a long time, and I don't intend to. It's a terribly dangerous drug. But I'm still very much concerned with the laws and with the police approach to narcotics. I believe, as Joe Crunk and many psychiatrists do, that a man whose only crime is addiction belongs in a hospital, not a jail. And I strongly believe that we need a system whereby an addict, as in Britain, can obtain treatment during gradual withdrawal under supervision of a doctor.⁵⁷⁵

As Mulligan and his various ensembles of the 1950s became more popular, he became more selective of his performance venues, often rejecting opportunities to play in locations that he felt were not appropriately configured to accommodate a listening audience. He particularly objected to participating in touring "package" shows in which his group was one of many to perform. This feeling extended to jazz festivals as well, where he felt there were so many performing acts that no one group had sufficient time to work up its momentum. Mulligan later lamented about his experience with the typical festival audience:

I [often] felt like [saying], "Jesus, what are we playing for? Nobody's paying any attention. It really is frustrating," and I'd say [to myself], "Okay well, I'll play the best I can since we're getting paid," and I see these young idiots out there with beach balls! . . . And there's no sense in that. They live in their own private world. . . . And then there's another bunch of people who weren't paying attention to us who were having their picnics. They were a second audience altogether, not connected to the beach ball gang. Then, as I was out there for awhile, I realized there was a third audience sitting quietly with all of this turmoil going on around, and they're absorbed in the music. I said,

⁵⁷⁴ Hentoff, "Profiles II," 72.

⁵⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 68.

“Aha!” Because of the turmoil the other people were making, it seemed like nobody was listening, and really there was a mammoth audience that was listening. It was like, “Okay, man.” And that brightened things up for us because we realized that there actually was an audience, and they had to put up with these idiots the same way that we did.⁵⁷⁶

He much preferred playing in a small auditorium such as at a local art museum than at a large arena designed for sports competitions.

He also, in the 1950s, began getting more selective with respect to the terms of his performance and recording agreements. For example, he was not particularly fond of committing to long term engagements, for he wanted to remain free to “indulge his restlessness.”⁵⁷⁷ This perpetual edginess resulted in the abrupt termination of a contract he signed in the mid 1950s with Mercury Records. When Mercury was not ready to record when Mulligan was, his impatience got the better of the relationship. “I really got teed off at them because when the group was ready to record, they always had something else to do. So, I always felt we kind of got short-tripped.”⁵⁷⁸ Around the same time, Mulligan rejected a \$25,000 a year guarantee from a major record label for his services as coordinator of the company’s entire jazz output because it required exclusivity.

He did temporarily disband his groups several times in the mid 1950s in an attempt to focus entirely on composing and arranging, or just to rest, but these attempts often failed. Hentoff reported that “A vacation in Bermuda a couple of

⁵⁷⁶ Mulligan, oral history.

⁵⁷⁷ Hentoff, “Profiles II,” 71-2.

⁵⁷⁸ Mulligan, oral history.

summers ago quickly proved so unnerving that he got in touch with musicians on the island, and from then on played at jam sessions four nights a week.”⁵⁷⁹

As seen earlier, Mulligan’s relationships with the band leaders for whom he wrote were tempestuous at best. In the 1950s, now that he was the leader, his attitude towards his sidemen was often equally stormy. He was known to be arrogant and, at times, downright tyrannical. One of his former sidemen told Hentoff of an incident that led to a Mulligan tantrum:

The last time Gerry really exploded was after a concert we did at M.I.T. a few months ago. It didn’t come off well at all. Some classical composers—friends of Gerry’s—were in the audience, and he was particularly annoyed with us because we weren’t up to standards while *they* were there. The next week, in Milwaukee, we started to play very well, and he got furious at us because we hadn’t done it in Cambridge.⁵⁸⁰

Prior to performing at the Salle Pleyel on June 1, 1954, as part of the Third Paris Jazz Festival, all three Quartet sidemen apparently quit the band in protest, but changed their minds before the performance. Mulligan recalls,

They [Brookmeyer, Isola, and Red Mitchell who had replaced Bill Anthony on bass] present themselves in my hotel room and quit. En masse they quit! I said, “Wait a minute, you guys. What do you mean you quit? We just got here!” They said, “This is too rough, we quit!” Then I said, “Well, alright you quit. Go ahead!” They said, “We want our [plane] tickets.” I said, “I’ll give you your money back in the states. Take me to the union. If you’re quitting here, that’s it.” Well, finally they came down off of that when they realized that I wasn’t about to give them their tickets to take off and go back to the States.⁵⁸¹

⁵⁷⁹ Hentoff, “Profiles II,” 72.

⁵⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 74.

⁵⁸¹ Mulligan, oral history.

Despite this near disastrous state of affairs, the Quartet's performance at the Paris festival earned an exemplary review from noted French jazz critic, Charles Delaunay.

. . . Would such a reduced combo be able to project beyond the footlights in as large and cold a hall as the Salle Pleyel? Wouldn't the balance of the Quartet suffer from having Chet Baker's trumpet replaced by the trombone of Bob Brookmeyer, who was completely unknown here? And last of all, how could this simple little quartet of white musicians compete with the memories left by the big bands of Dizzy Gillespie, Duke Ellington and Count Basie, or by Louis Armstrong's dynamic Hot Five which we had previously heard in this same Salle Pleyel?

All these fears melted away as if by magic the moment the Gerry Mulligan Quartet launched into the first bars of "Come Out Wherever You Are," with which they opened the first concert of the Jazz Festival that memorable evening of June 1, 1954.

Something very unusual happened - for a jazz concert: the audience was seized at once by a sort of rapt fervor, and a real communion was established between the public and the band. It was as if the audience had suddenly put aside its customary boisterousness to give complete attention to a really special musical treat. . .⁵⁸²

Notwithstanding the entrancing effect perceived by Delaunay and cited in the album's liner notes, Klinkowitz observes that of the seventeen numbers preserved from Paris, fifteen are covers of Baker-Mulligan material from the original Quartet's repertoire.

For Bob Brookmeyer, the inhibiting factor must have been considerable, although the real importance lies with Mulligan, for whom the six months out of circulation and off his horn proved to be a considerable hold on development. The material he presents in June 1954 is a virtual reprise of his musical situation of a year before when he was busted. The painfulness of Brookmeyer's timidity and Mulligan's own arrested growth is most evident in the formerly delicate, miniaturized showcase numbers of the first quartet, where

⁵⁸² Charles Delaunay, liner notes to *Gerry Mulligan Quartet Paris Concert*, Pacific Jazz 10102 LP, 1954.

Baker's formerly breathy yet dominant lead fades away in Brookmeyer's hands to an uncertain whisper.⁵⁸³

Over the next year, Brookmeyer would make his presence felt in the Quartet in a very positive way as he not only emerged as a soloist, but began contributing his own compositions to the Quartet's repertoire. Subsequently, the acclaimed live album recorded at Storyville and released in 1956 does not contain a single number from the original Mulligan-Baker Quartet.

By the end of the decade, Mulligan's demeanor softened somewhat, as another sideman recalls:

A lot of insistence on having his own way was really grasping at straws. His personal problems were so severe that they took all the energy out of him, and the only thing he could hang on to was a very slender ego. If he wasn't right—or, rather, if he couldn't prove himself right—all the time, the world seemed to be coming to an end. He's a lot calmer now, and can even admit he's been wrong.⁵⁸⁴

Mulligan's intolerant attitude towards loquacious audience members also continued through the 1950s. Charlie Bourgeois, Storyville historian who was also George Wein's assistant, recalls, "Gerry has often told customers that he doesn't know why they come to a place and pay an expensive minimum to listen to music and then make so much noise that neither they nor anybody else can hear. That speech usually gets applause."⁵⁸⁵ Sometimes he was so harsh with the audience that later in the evening, after his remorse got the better of him, he would apologize for his behavior. To the members of the audience who were respectful of his music he was

⁵⁸³ Klinkowitz, 85.

⁵⁸⁴ Hentoff, "Profiles II," 74.

⁵⁸⁵ Ibid., 76.

rather amiable as he delivered monologues between songs on topics such as jazz issues, current events, politics, and various other random topics.

Eventually, Mulligan's attitude towards his promoters, managers, sidemen, and audiences mellowed as his confidence grew in response to his success. A particular source of self-assurance for him was his belief that his baritone saxophone playing had improved significantly over the decade. He says, "It's only quite lately that I've been really controlling my horn and have been able to express myself immediately without scuffling with it. I even have a few days every once in a while when I feel all the time that I have a direct line between my imagination and my fingers."⁵⁸⁶

Mulligan's rising confidence in his performance proficiency, a confidence that was fueled by repeated praises in the jazz press, was a mixed blessing, for the resulting hours that were consumed by performing, rehearsing, managing, and traveling left little time for the creation of new charts. He rationalizes, "you do so much writing on your horn, it doesn't leave you much energy or many ideas for physical writing. Maybe that's why so many of the really good jazz players write."⁵⁸⁷ The fact that he was also a victim of the success of his recordings diverted the demand away from new material.

What happened is that success came as a result of an instrumentation and approach that I wasn't thinking of as a set formula when I got on it. Actually the musical possibilities were endless, but when I started taking the quartet around the country, people would invariably ask for what they had heard on our records. Remembering my own disappointments as a kid when the bands I followed on records didn't

⁵⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁷ Hentoff, "Counterpoint," *Downbeat*, April 20, 1955: 30.

play the same things when I caught them ‘live,’ I felt it was a responsibility I owed to the audiences on the road to play what they wanted to hear. It was a compromise. I don’t feel I compromised my musical integrity doing it, but it did prevent me from playing more new works (if I had had time to write them) and from diversifying my approach.⁵⁸⁸

He eventually succumbed to his desire to somehow find time to write, and, at the end of 1954, he disbanded the Quartet.

I’ve seen too many people get carried away by money-making and by trying to cash in quickly on success. They get carried away from themselves and become tied down to a formula. I didn’t want to fall into that. For one thing, Arlyne and I realized that there’s only so much money we can use. Then too, the big money over a long period of time is not to be made on one-nighters in the clubs, but through other channels like composing and arranging. And you can’t write well when you’re caught up in the other thing.⁵⁸⁹

Mulligan had become an astute observer of the jazz scene by being entrenched in it, and as such, was well aware of the ephemeral loyalties of its fans. He therefore realized that, if we wanted to extend his recent successes to insure longevity, it would be necessary for him to enhance his emphasis on good, original writing. From 1945 to 1953, he had spent most of his career writing with brief periods of playing. Now that he was playing steadily, he had become constrained by the configuration that had brought him his fame and fortune—the pianoless quartet. He said, “I would just as soon be on top in a kind of background way than in the performing limelight. I think you can stay longer that way. I don’t want to be an overnight sensation. . . . I was frankly a little nervous about this being just a quick ride.”⁵⁹⁰

⁵⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁰ Ibid.

So in December 1954, Mulligan began turning down prestigious engagements so that he could stay off the road long enough to return to writing again. By February, he laments the difficulties he has had focusing on composition, difficulties he never had before.

I've promised Count Basie, for example, an arrangement for a month or more. He or his wife call about it periodically, but it seems as if all I can do these days is write out the first chorus and lay out the rest of the arrangement, but somehow I can't get down to filling it in. I think it's a matter of my wanting to write so much that I've built up a kind of block.⁵⁹¹

By March, he was playing again with a string of dates at various colleges, at Basin Street Club (New York City), and at Carnegie Hall. By April, he had another plan—he and Arlyne would leave for Europe in June.

We want to look around and try to find a place, quiet and sunshiny, where I can get my scattered brain together again. If I find a place I like, I'd like to settle down and try to write. Eventually we'd like to have one headquarters there and another here. We could divide the year so that I could write for six months there, and then return here for concerts, club dates and recording during the other six months. That way I'll never get too far away from writing and I'll have the benefit of two contrasting (and thereby, stimulating) atmospheres in which to work.⁵⁹²

Mulligan's inability to commit to this plan got him back on the road and into the studio again, and over the next several years, he would lead various pianoless ensembles including: a quartet with Jon Eardley on trumpet; a sextet with Eardley or Don Ferrara (trumpet), Zoot Sims (tenor saxophone), Brookmeyer (valve trombone), Red Mitchell, Peck Morrison, or Bill Crow (bass), and Hamilton, Bunker, or Dave Bailey (drums); and a quartet with Art Farmer (trumpet), Crow, and Bailey.

⁵⁹¹ Ibid.

⁵⁹² Ibid.

Mulligan's most productive year of the decade as a performer/leader was 1957. He entered the studio numerous times to record with other popular jazz artists including Paul Desmond (*The Gerry Mulligan-Paul Desmond Quartet* with Joe Benjamin on bass and Dave Bailey on drums -Verve MGV-8246); Thelonious Monk (*Mulligan Meets Monk* with Wilbur Ware on bass and Shadow Wilson on drums-Riverside RLP-1106); Stan Getz (*Getz Meets Mulligan in Hi-Fi* with Lou Levy on piano, Ray Brown on bass, and Stan Levey on drums - Verve MGV-8249); Chet Baker (*Reunion with Chet Baker* with Henry Grimes on bass and Dave Bailey on drums - World Pacific PJ-1241); and Annie Ross (*Annie Ross Sings a Song with Mulligan!* with Dave Bailey on drums, and Bill Crow or Henry Grimes on bass - World Pacific WP-1253). Mulligan and Monk had known each other since the Paris festival of June 1954. Mulligan sat in on an impromptu jam session with Monk following the festival. According to observers, he first seemed confused by Monk's unconventional accompaniment style, but soon fell into the groove, delighting himself and others until Arlyne abruptly announced that it was time to go home.⁵⁹³ The album with Monk has one new Mulligan original composition, "Decidedly," based on Charlie Shavers' "Undecided." Mulligan had mixed feelings about his 1957 collaboration with Monk.

The way Monk accompanies you and the way he approaches chord progressions really demanded a whole different melodic approach from me. I could hear in places where I was getting it together, you know where I was getting into a groove with him that really fit and in other places; I was really stumbling because I couldn't find my way. And for all that, I kind of marvel at my guts to go record something like that; to go put myself in the frying pan that way; especially since it turned out to be the only time we ever recorded anything together.

⁵⁹³ Klinkowitz, 107.

That in itself was kind of a happy accident. I'm glad we did it even if it has big bruises on it.⁵⁹⁴

Also in 1957, Mulligan organized and scored four charts for a short-lived fifteen-piece band with Ferrara, Don Joseph, Jerry Lloyd, and Phil Sunkel (trumpets); Brookmeyer, Jim Dahl, and Frank Rehak (trombones); Lee Konitz and Hal McKusick (alto); Charlie Rouse and Zoot Sims (tenor); Mulligan and Gene Allen (baritone); Joe Benjamin (bass); and Bailey (drums). This ensemble recorded all four numbers at Columbia studios in April 1957. The resulting tracks were included on *Gerry Mulligan: The Arranger* (Columbia JC-34803), an album that was not released until 1977. This album also included old recordings of Mulligan compositions that were performed by the big bands of Gene Krupa and Elliot Lawrence. Henri Renaud likens the sound of the 1957 band to that of the Krupa and Lawrence bands of ten or more years earlier.

All those characteristics of Mulligan's style that were already discernible in his contributions to Krupa's and Lawrence's books have here come to full maturity. We note a supreme lightness of touch in the ensemble work, a taste for linear and multilinear melodies as well as an elegant strictness in the written parts that stands in sharp contrast with the freedom allowed the soloists when they improvise.⁵⁹⁵

The material was nothing new at all, and Mulligan viewed his work with this 1957 big band as an incomplete composition project and somewhat of a failure.

Well, I started an album and I never really finished. The reason it never got done is because the band itself sounded wonderful, but I had a hard time. I didn't really write the rhythm section parts as completely as they should have been and the guys kind of suffered through it. I had [drummer] Dave Bailey on some of the things, and it didn't really quite gel. It wasn't really Dave's fault. I thought about it as I went

⁵⁹⁴ Mulligan, oral history.

⁵⁹⁵ Liner notes to *Gerry Mulligan: The Arranger* .

along, and I think it was my fault for not being able to give him more clear cut indications. The whole thing really didn't get off the ground and come to life the way that I wanted it to. So, I wanted to go back and re-think some of the stuff, and I needed to write some more for it. . . . I just didn't wind up having enough material, and we never got back to it. I was always sorry that I didn't because I always loved the sound of that band.⁵⁹⁶

The year ended on a high note for Mulligan when he appeared on *The Sound of Jazz*, the historic CBS television broadcast of December 8, 1957. On the show, he first participates with the Count Basie All Stars on “Dickie’s Dream” and “Fast and Happy Blues,” holding his own with fellow soloists Coleman Hawkins, Ben Webster, Dickie Wells, and Jon Newman. Later in the broadcast, he appears with jazz legends, Hawkins, Lester Young, Webster, Roy Eldridge, Doc Cheatham, Vic Dickenson, Mal Waldron, Milt Hinton, Danny Barker, and Osie Johnson as they accompany Billie Holiday on “Fine and Mellow.” This was a particularly special segment for Mulligan.

The high point for me was playing behind Billie, and they gave me a solo to play as well. That was one of the most touching moments of anything that I’ve ever been in on film. When they do the close up of Billie’s face, I start playing a solo, and the camera’s on my face, and then, while I’m playing, it goes to her face and her reaction, and man, it always brings tears trickling down my face on that one. She has such a sweet, serene look, that kind of Mona Lisa smile that just puts me away, a lovely moment. So, that was an incredibly fulfilling experience on television. Not the sort of words that you usually use for a television experience.⁵⁹⁷

Further demonstrating the public’s perception of his then stature among the greats of jazz, Mulligan and other celebrated musicians posed for one of the most iconic jazz photographs ever published on August 12, 1958. The photograph, entitled “The Great Jazz Day,” was taken by Art Kane for *Esquire* in front of 17 126th Street

⁵⁹⁶ Mulligan, oral history.

⁵⁹⁷ Ibid.

in Harlem. Mulligan, shown standing with Dizzy Gillespie, Roy Eldridge, and J. C. Heard, is one of fifty-seven famous jazz musicians in the photograph.

At the Newport Jazz Festival of 1958, Duke Ellington featured Mulligan and fellow baritone saxophonist Harry Carney in a duet penned by Ellington and entitled “Prima Bara Dubla.” Mulligan remembers, “That was an exciting event for me. To have a piece written for me to play with a band was one thing, but to play with Carney, who was my idol, was very special. We were great friends, but I never ceased to be in awe of him. It was a nice piece they wrote. I liked it a lot.”⁵⁹⁸ Quincy Jones thought otherwise.

The Carney-Mulligan baritone duet on “Prima Bara Dubla” I don’t like. It’s a gimmick. I might appreciate it better except for the fact that when you have these two plus the Ellington orchestra plus Duke as a composer and player, what happens here is not enough. It’s trite thematically; it sounds contrived; and when you’re playing in a tempo like this in a minor key, if there isn’t real emotion, it just dies. This died. And they wind up in thirds at the end. Now that’s very “original.” It implies real “organization.”⁵⁹⁹

Mulligan collaborated with two of Ellington’s other sidemen in 1959: Ben Webster (*Gerry Mulligan Meets Ben Webster*, with Jimmy Rowles on piano, Leroy Vinnegar on bass, and Mel Lewis on drums - Verve MGV-8343) and Johnny Hodges (*Gerry Mulligan Meets Johnny Hodge*, with Claude Williamson on piano, Buddy Clark on bass, and Mel Lewis on drums - Verve MGV-8367). He composed “Tell Me When” for the Webster session; and “Eighteen Carrots for Rabbit,” “What’s the Rush,” and “Bunny,” for his work with Hodges. Mulligan was particularly enamored of working

⁵⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁹ Quincy Jones, “Review of Duke Ellington, Newport 1958,” *The Jazz Review*, 2/4 (May 1959): 30.

with Webster. “Oh, the vitality, the originality, the humor, the anger when he wanted to. He was such a unique player. . . . Ben was kind of a thinking man’s tenor player. He was terrific.”⁶⁰⁰

Whether he was leading a combo, a big band, or something in between, most of Mulligan’s work of the 1950s, a decade that was a commercial success for him, evolved from the pianoless quartet design he had established at the Haig. Even though he did manage to compose occasionally for his ensembles, the responsibilities of leading, organizing, promoting, and rehearsing his various groups, coupled with his various lingering personal issues, made it impossible for him to commit himself to writing at the same energy level as before. His several attempts to take sabbaticals from performing so that he could devote himself to composition were short-lived and not especially fruitful.

As the decade ended, and Mulligan was organizing his first Concert Jazz Band, he had to look all the way back to the late 1940s to find what he considered his last period of artistic compositional output. As he reflected on the creative void, he was hopeful that his writing career would be fully resurrected in the 1960s.

Actually, although I have a reputation as a writer, I haven’t written much since the Miles Davis sessions. Oh, I’ve done some arrangements, of course, but lines for the quartet have never cost me much work or thought, and many of them evolved out of our improvising on the job. What I’ve done in the fifties is not really new writing; it’s based on what I wrote for Miles. That was the first time—except for my initial tries at writing when I was a kid—that I wrote arrangements that weren’t commissioned, and I’ve done almost no writing for the sake of writing since. . . . I hope soon again to get into a frame of mind where I can write just to write.⁶⁰¹

⁶⁰⁰ Mulligan, oral history.

⁶⁰¹ Nat Hentoff, “Profiles, ‘In the Mainstream: Gerry Mulligan – II,’” *The New Yorker*, March 28, 1959: 76-8.

The writing void continued through the three plus year life of Mulligan's Concert Jazz Band, a thirteen piece pianoless ensemble he organized in 1960. The band debuted at Basin Street East (New York City) in April 1960 originally with Danny Stiles, Phil Sunkel, Don Ferrara on trumpets; Bob Brookmeyer, Wayne Andre, Alan Raph, trombones; Eddie Wassermann, Dick Meldonian, Bill Holman, Gene Allen on reeds; Bill Takas on bass; Dave Bailey on drums; and Mulligan on baritone and piano.⁶⁰² Mulligan wrote only a very few of the band's charts and commissioned the bulk of the book from Brookmeyer, Holman, Al Cohn, and Johnny Mandel. Holman recalls, "I'd known Gerry since the early fifties when he brought in those charts for Kenton, and we'd see each other periodically. . . . He knew that I had the same kind of approach to writing—probably a lot of it was gained from playing his music. I think he thought he could trust me."⁶⁰³ Other composer/arrangers became important contributors to the CJB as well, including Johnny Carisi, George Russell, and Gary McFarland. Mulligan even commissioned CJB arrangements for songs he had originally composed himself for earlier ensembles. For example the CJB charts for Mulligan originals "Bweebida Bobbida," "A Ballad," and "I Know, Don't Know How" were all written by Brookmeyer. Mulligan remembers:

In fact, all the time I had that band I only wrote two or three charts and the whole idea of having a band was because I wanted a band to write for! . . . I've never really been good at being a split personality in that way. I'm not schizoid in that way where I could take care of business and then just turn around and write music. I just couldn't do it. So, having such a limited amount of time to write and being able to get myself in the frame of mind to write, I only ended up doing a few charts. I did "Walking Shoes." Very little thought went into it even

⁶⁰² Kirchner, Bill, liner notes to *The Complete Verve Gerry Mulligan Concert Jazz Band Sessions*, Mosaic MD4-221 CD Box Set, 2003.

⁶⁰³ Ibid.

though it takes me time to make an arrangement, since it's not just a copy of the [earlier versions]. The next chart that I wrote was "Come Rain or Come Shine." The only other thing was a reduced arrangement of "Young Blood". Did I write anything else [for the CJB]? Not that I can think of.⁶⁰⁴

Before he disbanded it in 1963, the CJB toured often, recorded five albums, and was especially popular with both the jazz public and jazz press. Managing this band was especially demanding for Mulligan, as he recalls: "I was not just organizing a band but running a business, like it or not, making a big investment in the thing and without any business managers or road managers or anything else. I had to take care of it and that meant dealing with agents and all the rest of it."⁶⁰⁵

Consequently, more than a decade had passed since Mulligan had sat down in solitude, pencil in hand, score paper in front of him, for days on end, to generate an original musical idea, and to shape it into a fresh compositional creation. That he was too busy with other things was perhaps a feeble excuse. Maybe he had simply lost the spark to generate new ideas, the will to create.

⁶⁰⁴ Mulligan, oral history.

⁶⁰⁵ Ibid.

Writing Resurgence

Mulligan did eventually get back to focusing on composing in a big way, and later in his career, he pursued a variety of avenues as outputs for his new creativity. He wrote the title song for the 1965 film *A Thousand Clowns* with actress Judy Holliday supplying the lyrics. Mulligan and Holliday met in 1959, and they had a very close romantic relationship until she died from the complications of breast cancer in 1965. He supported her during her illness, and her death had a devastating effect on him. “I remember the night she died, the day she died. [Paul] Desmond and Herb Gardner, my best friend, took me in tow and kind of hung out with me until I had adjusted to the worst of the shock.”⁶⁰⁶ Mulligan and Holliday wrote a number of songs together, most of them never recorded, but some were, including “Butterflies with Hiccups,” “The Ant Hill,” “It Must be Christmas,” “Summer’s Over,” and “Loving You.” In 1961, he organized a sixteen piece big band with three French horns (instead of trombones) and recorded an album of the couple’s songs with Holliday singing (*Holliday with Mulligan* DRG SL 5191). Mulligan also collaborated with Holliday on the musical *Happy Birthday*, which was adapted from the short-lived Broadway play starring Helen Hayes and written by Anita Loos. This musical theater work, with music by Mulligan and lyrics by Holliday, premiered at the University of Alabama in December 1974, nine years after Holliday’s death.

From the late 1960s onward, Mulligan’s writing began to be influenced by diverse cultures. For example, he recorded a live album called *Gandharva* (WB

⁶⁰⁶ Mulligan, oral history.

1909, 1971)⁶⁰⁷ in San Francisco's Grace Cathedral with Paul Beavers playing the church's pipe organ and Bernard Krause the Moog synthesizer. Mulligan composed the exotic, Eastern-tinged "By Your Grace" for the album. He composed "Aire de Buenos Aires" and recorded it in Milan, Italy, with the Argentine bandoneon player Astor Piazzola (*Astor Piazzola Summit Tango Nuevo* Festival 638, 1974). While making this album, Mulligan met Franca Rota Borghini Baldovinetti, whom he would marry two years later. Franca's diverse career had included managing her family wine business, working for the International Castle Institute, freelancing as a photo journalist, and reporting for Italian television in New York.⁶⁰⁸ Franca was a devoted wife to Mulligan, who supported him and was by his side until he died in 1996. His composition "Etude for Franca" was written for her.

The Age of Steam (A&M SP 3036, 1971) was Mulligan's initial venture into fusion jazz. His approach to instrumentation for the album's ensemble demonstrated a drastic change in his rhythm section philosophy. "I was dead tired of having a two-man rhythm section. It just was too sparse, and not being one to do things by halves, I went the whole distance and had a six man rhythm section: electric piano, electric bass, drums, guitar, vibes and percussion. And the rest of the ensemble grew out of that."⁶⁰⁹ The album featured eight Mulligan originals including "One to Ten in Ohio," "K-4 Pacific," "Grand Tour," and "Country Beaver." Klinkowitz notes that:

The compositional aspects of Mulligan's work on *The Age of Steam* support the commitments to a new playing style. Even the three-part

⁶⁰⁷ "Gandharva (from Hindu mythology)" means the celestial musician.

⁶⁰⁸ *Gerry Mulligan Biography*, Mulligan Publishing Co., Inc., <<http://gerrymulligan.com/bio.html>> (31 may 2010).

⁶⁰⁹ Mulligan, oral history.

“Over the Hill and Out of the Woods,” which features his piano throughout, is built from drawing the most from a simple riff figure in which the conventional keyboard interweaves with a growing ensemble, the retards for a flowing legato passage, and finally cranks up the tempo for a spate of solos in almost roaring big-band fashion—yet with no more melodic complexity than the simple opening phrase.⁶¹⁰

A few years later, Mulligan organized a band using a variation of *The Age of Steam* instrumentation, a sextet consisting of himself on soprano and baritone saxophones plus a five-piece rhythm section: Dave Samuels on vibraphone, Mike Santiago on guitar, Tom Fay on keyboards, George Duvivier on bass, and Bob Rosengarden on drums. This group recorded *Idol Gossip* (Chiarusco 155, 1976) including six new Mulligan compositions: “Idol Gossip,” “Walk on the Water,” “Strayhorn Two,” “Out Back of the Barn,” “North Atlantic Run,” and “Taurus Moon.”

The 1983 Grammy award winning album *Little Big Horn* (GRP A-1003, 1983) contains all new Mulligan compositions for both big band and smaller group configurations including “Little Big Horn,” “Bright Angel Falls,” “Under a Star,” “Sun on Stairs,” “Another Kind of Sunday,” and “I Never Was a Young Man” (on which Mulligan sings). This was his first collaboration with keyboardist/composer/arranger Dave Grusin and the first of several Mulligan albums that was recorded and digitally master for GRP records. Mulligan explains the album’s concept: “I’m introducing a whole new approach on this album, another atmosphere altogether. . . . People have always said that I play the baritone like a little horn. I’ve attempted to create the illusion that it’s not playing in the low register

⁶¹⁰ Klinkowitz, 179.

by concentrating on its qualities as a melodic instrument. There are many basic ways of hearing jazz—mine will always be the melodic.”⁶¹¹

Later in the 1980s, thanks to the encouragement of New York Philharmonic music director Zubin Mehta, Mulligan’s writing interests turned towards the concert hall. In 1984, he finished his first work for symphony orchestra, *Entente for Baritone Saxophone and Orchestra*. The work was premiered in Italy in June of that year by Filarmonia Veneta under the baton of Rico Saccani. In October, Mulligan opened his European tour with a performance of *Entente* at the Royal Festival Hall in London. He also scored “K-4 Pacific,” a composition originally written for *The Age of Steam*, in a concerto grosso setting for his quartet and orchestra. In 1987, Mulligan performed both *K-4 Pacific* and *Entente* in Tel Aviv with the Israel Philharmonic with Mehta conducting. He also later performed with the Houston Symphony, Stockholm Philharmonic, and New York Philharmonic. Writing for the *New York Times*, John Rockwell had this to say about the December 1989 performance with the New York Philharmonic:

Zubin Mehta has always had a soft spot for crossover experimentation. . . . Now it's the turn of Gerry Mulligan, the mellow master of the cool-jazz baritone saxophone, who is the featured performer (along with his accompanying trio) at the current Philharmonic subscription concerts at Avery Fisher Hall. . . . The format is curious, reflecting the inherent awkwardness of any marriage of vernacular spontaneity and classical formalism. . . . The most awkward moment yesterday afternoon came when Mr. Mulligan and his fine musicians - Bill Charlap, pianist; Dean Johnson, double bassist, and Richard De Rosa, drummer -played a 17-minute set on their own, between Mr. Mulligan's two composed pieces. . . . Not counting the jazz, which consisted of a lyrical improvisation followed by a livelier one, both unidentified, the more effective of Mr. Mulligan's two compositions was the first, "Entente." This was for solo saxophone and orchestra, and Mr. Mulligan really composed for the classical instruments, rather

⁶¹¹ Liner notes to *Little Big Horn*, GRP A-1003, 1983.

than just letting them vamp along in rudimentary boredom. . . . The title ostensibly refers to the third-stream aspect of the proceedings. But the modal, vaguely Oriental flavor of the solo part also suggested an entente between East and West . . . with Mr. Mulligan coloring the line sensuously with wisps of throaty timbre and the orchestra purling along pleasantly. . . . His final piece, "K-4 Pacific," is another in that prospering genre of compositions that seek to emulate steam locomotives; perhaps there's something about group performance that reminds musicians of mighty machinery with moving parts. . . . The trouble here is that the score was conceived for jazz ensemble and only later reworked for jazz quartet and orchestra, and here the orchestra's part is indeed rudimentary. Still, the jazz musicians improvised with glee - the solo part in "Entente" is much more firmly fixed.⁶¹²

On February 7, 1988, Mulligan appeared with the Sea Cliff Chamber Players of Hempstead, Long Island, to perform *Octet for Sea Cliff*, a work for baritone saxophone and chamber ensemble that was commissioned from Mulligan by the group. His first work for orchestra *without* saxophone was entitled *Momo's Clock* and was premiered by the Concordia Orchestra, conducted by Marin Alsop at Lincoln Center in January 1991. Mulligan also wrote the scores for several films including *Luv* (1967) starring Jack Lemmon, and *La Menace* (1977) starring Yves Montand.

⁶¹² John Rockwell, "Review/Music; Gerry Mulligan in Philharmonic Crossover," *New York Times*, December 16, 1989.

Conclusion

Mulligan's early composing/arranging career was chosen as the focus of this dissertation because it was the aspect of his professional life that has been least covered despite the quality of his work at that time. The research presented here shows that Gerry Mulligan's earliest recognition was as a composer/arranger, and it was the innovations of his writing that gained him the respect of fellow musicians, jazz critics, and the public. It was only after he became a bandleader playing his own music that he became more identified as a baritone saxophonist. He always thought of himself as a writer first.

This paper presents the history of Mulligan's composing/arranging career starting with his earliest professional writing projects in the mid 1940s and ending with the dissolution of his first pianoless quartet with Chet Baker (1953). This point in Mulligan's history is a logical place to close because subsequent to his breakup with Baker and during most of the 1950s, Mulligan's popularity as a performer and leader skyrocketed, but his productivity as a composer/arranger fell off significantly, much to his chagrin. His writing career was rejuvenated, however, in the 1960s, and he spent the rest of his life writing prolifically.

Gerry Mulligan's professional composing/arranging career began in 1944 when he was a restless teenager in Philadelphia. By the end of the 1940s, he had not only befriended, performed, and written for Charlie Parker, but had contributed the bulk of the book for one of the most seminal ensembles in modern jazz, the nonet led by Miles Davis. In the process, he had become a highly respected big-band composer/arranger, writing some of the most original and innovative charts for such

celebrated leaders as Elliott Lawrence, Gene Krupa, Claude Thornhill, and Stan Kenton.

The arrangements that Mulligan wrote for Elliot Lawrence were instrumental in elevating Lawrence's band beyond the dance floor. Thanks to the talents of the then eighteen-year-old Mulligan, Lawrence's book gradually filled with fresh, energetic, boppish arrangements. A particularly characteristic element of these early charts for Lawrence is that they feature themes that are long, moving, elastic and very horizontal melodic lines. This is particularly evident in Mulligan's score for the brisk twelve-bar blues "Elevation," a song which became one of Lawrence's most popular.

Mulligan's charts for Gene Krupa of 1946 and 47 also demonstrate the burgeoning creativity of the young composer/arranger. He is thoroughly conscious of the techniques of his predecessors such as Duke Ellington and Fletcher Henderson and draws upon their innovations. He is also greatly influenced by the many band-leader soloists, and his arrangements therefore provide a splendid canvas for improvised art. But his continued fascination with bebop provided his greatest influence, a fact that is clearly evident in his Krupa arrangements. Despite the often fiery nature of bop, Mulligan manages to create an open texture that is fresh, articulate, and modern. In "Disc Jockey Jump" one can hear Mulligan's continued characteristic concern for linear clarity. The melody, presented by a quartet of alto saxophone, tenor saxophone, trumpet, and trombone, is a long linear passage. While this quartet of horn players plays the unison melody line, the rest of the band provides the backup support. Krupa actually compared Mulligan's approach in this tune to a *concerto grosso*.

The scores that Mulligan wrote for Thornhill under Gil Evans' wing demonstrate the young arranger's evolutionary progression resulting from his late-forties New York influences: the people with whom he associated as well as the bands he heard perform. "Jeru" is his most innovative of his arrangements for Thornhill, particularly with respect to its approach to rhythm, harmony and texture. It represents one of the earliest examples of changing time signatures in jazz. Mulligan explains that the irregular meters he chose for the arrangement came about to support the melody. The unusual chord progressions, altered pitches, substitutions, and non-standard voicings demonstrate Mulligan's movement to a more modern harmonic idiom.

Mulligan's writing for the Davis Nonet continues to demonstrate his rapidly developing creative capability. Despite his advances with respect to style, orchestration, harmony, and counterpoint, he still manages to remain respectful to the then forty-year-old jazz tradition. His Nonet pieces presage the appealing simplicity that his writing would achieve later. This is particularly evident in "Venus de Milo" which begins with a spare open theme that is followed by Davis's restrained, vibratoless solo, a trumpet sound that perhaps foreshadows that of Mulligan's future pianoless quartet costar, Chet Baker. Mulligan enhances the arrangement's thematic material with a developing technique of his that involves the independence of ensemble's inner voices, a practice that he points out he heard used by Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn. Of the twelve numbers recorded by the Nonet, Mulligan composed and/or arranged seven of them.

The charts that Mulligan wrote for Kenton represent a fresh approach to swinging big band music. He softens the overbearing brassy sound of the Kenton band with a new saxophone-oriented technique. He has a natural way of treating counterpoint with each line presented in unison by individual ensemble sections, a practice that he says was inspired by earlier New Orleans-style jazz. “Young Blood” turned out to be a great work, and is the Kenton chart for which Mulligan is most identified. It is an exercise in counterpoint, asymmetrical phrasing, and superimposed meters. Mulligan’s linear style of composition is demonstrated with a flowing saxophone section line that opens the piece and serves as somewhat of a fugal subject from which the material that follows spins out.

Mulligan’s imaginative arrangements for his pianoless quartet with Chet Baker expose the group’s unique sound, a sound characterized by the mutually complementary interplay between Chet Baker’s elegiac sense of melody and Mulligan’s attention to the overall effect and his methodology to bring it all together. As a result, while the individual playing was pleasing, the combination was far greater than the sum of the parts. As with the Davis Nonet, Mulligan again used the fewest number of instruments to create the desired effect.

Mulligan’s 1953 Tentette was what he believed was one of the most artistically successful of his many ventures. With it, he was able to blend the delicacy of the Pianoless Quartet’s sound with the complexities of his writing for larger ensembles. The sounds strike an effective balance between intimacy on the one hand, and swing feeling (when it was desired) on the other. Mulligan also shows that he

can make his compositions assume new identities when he re-engineers them to fit ensembles of different instrumentations.

Gerry Mulligan gained a reputation as an arranger whose unique scores were characterized by moving inner parts, balanced timbres, low dynamics, light swing, and an emphasis on melody. It was during his early career (1945-1953) that Mulligan established his unique voice. He learned from Gil Evans and others with whom he associated at Evans' apartment in the late 1940s that the arranger should value the individuality of each performer while creating a sense of harmony within the group. Mulligan, along with many others in jazz, saw this characteristic in the work of Duke Ellington. "Duke's band always sounded like they were hearing themselves as they were playing. And Duke was able—for a longer period than any other leader—to take divergent personalities and combine them in a homogeneous unit."⁶¹³ The Mulligan ensembles played together, listened to each other, and worked as a cohesive group. Also through Evans' influence, Mulligan developed the ability to create stunning instrumental effects with smaller forces than normal.

From the earliest days with Elliott Lawrence, Mulligan became adept at writing lines that were relatively simple, flowing, and lean through a musical language that was both cohesive and flexible. While he preferred low volume, his big band works in particular demonstrated a wide dynamic range usually with a lighter-than-normal attack and a subtle sense of swing. As a writer for bandleaders Lawrence, Krupa, Thornhill, and Kenton, he integrated a swing era idiom into music that sounded more modern. Mulligan also exploited timbre and texture in his work,

⁶¹³ Mulligan, "The Importance of Jazz Tradition," *Downbeat*, Sept 21, 1955, 14, 50.

using the colors he had at his disposal in unique and appealing ways. Bill Crow observed that Mulligan's writing "contained a lyric quality and a strong feeling for the 'good times' spirit of the older, less organized forms in early jazz band writing and group improvising."⁶¹⁴ Unfortunately, the buoyancy and brightness of his music sometimes invited criticism that his persistent cheerfulness was trite and antithetical to bebop.

Perhaps the characteristic of Mulligan's writing that is most identified with his early style is its multilinearity, a contrapuntal manner of performing jazz that had fallen out of favor in both the swing and bebop eras. Mulligan saw counterpoint as an essential next step in the evolution of jazz.

It seemed necessary to clean out jazz writing. We'd gone as far as we could at the time with five-part chords and the rest of the up-and-down approach, and I think the linear emphasis helped open up new possibilities. In my own work, it's not that I always give every man his own line since I seldom use more than three lines, but there were more moving parts in my writing than was the usual case in modern jazz up until then. To complement the lines, I'll sometimes take horns of the same timbre and use them in unison, but it is true that the main direction in my writing is multi-linear.⁶¹⁵

He was an autodidact, and as such, his unschooled approach to counterpoint exposed a more natural and flowing sound than what would have resulted had he formalized his methods as Stan Kenton's most favored arrangers did. Gunther Schuller observes:

[Mulligan] hasn't fallen into the obvious snare of writing classic fugues—of using the classical forms of counterpoint as a basis for his originals and arrangements. His is simply clear linear writing in jazz terms; he showed that attempts in modern jazz to emphasize polyphonic writing and playing had bogged down because of the self-conscious stiffness of the players. Where others went out of the jazz

⁶¹⁴ Liner notes to *The Gerry Mulligan Songbook, Vol. 1*, World Pacific PJ-1237, 1957.

⁶¹⁵ *Ibid.*

field to take forms from classical music and then returned to try to put them into jazz, he eliminated that step and thereby eliminated stiffness in multi-linear jazz playing.⁶¹⁶

In Mulligan's early years, he earned a great deal more respect among musicians as a writer than as a player. He could always organize reading sessions to play his music, and the best musicians would show up whether they were paid or not. In 1957, Hentoff offered an explanation for the popularity of Mulligan's writing amongst his peers:

He had a remarkably resilient sense of linear invention and continuity. His scores are spare and all of a part. That is, they keep building toward, and finally achieve, an authentic whole—and that's a quality which explains why musicians like to play in a Mulligan combo or big band. He neither overly constricts them nor leaves them so free that they get lost. I've always wished Gerry had written more in recent years.⁶¹⁷

In close, I would like to say that this experience of chronicling Gerry Mulligan's early composing/arranging career, largely from his own viewpoint, has been an especially gratifying experience for me, and it is my hope that what I have shared has enhanced the reader's understanding and appreciation of this often complicated individual, not only as a composer/arranger, but as a person whose trials and tribulations have created for him a unique standing in the history of jazz.

⁶¹⁶ Quoted in Hentoff, *Jazz Is*, 121-2.

⁶¹⁷ Liner notes to *Revelation*, Blue Note BNLA-532 HS, 1957.

Appendices

The Gerry Mulligan Oral History

Gerry Mulligan recorded his oral history in February, March, and July of 1995 at his home in Darien, Connecticut. The process resulted in almost twenty-six hours of audio footage containing Mulligan's remembrances of and reflections on virtually every aspect of his personal and professional life since childhood. The format of the recordings is that of an informal interview conducted by Ken Poston, Director of the Los Angeles Jazz Institute. Throughout the interview, Poston gently suggested topics for Mulligan to address and then allowed the process to proceed in a rather free format.

After Mulligan's death in 1996, his widow, Franca R. Mulligan, granted permission to the Library of Congress to make portions of the oral history available on its "Gerry Mulligan Collection" website.⁶¹⁸ This is where I first became aware of the existence of this invaluable primary source for my research on Mulligan. The Library of Congress informed me that it only held the website excerpts of the oral history and that if wanted to access the entire set of recordings, I would need to contact Franca Mulligan directly, and request it from her. Through the Mulligan Publishing Company in Darien, I reached Ms. Mulligan by phone, and the two of us had several very pleasant conversations about Gerry. She is so proud of his work, and she enjoyed sharing her feelings about his legacy with me. I feel exceptionally honored to have had the opportunity to converse with her.

Regarding the oral history, Ms. Mulligan informed me that that she was in possession of the sixteen digital audio tapes (DAT) that contained the original 1995

⁶¹⁸ <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/diglib/ihas/html/mulligan/mulligan-home.html>

recordings. Through an agreement, she loaned me the tapes to use for my dissertation. Using a borrowed DAT player and an Apple PowerMac G5 workstation running Final Cut Pro, I created twenty-eight AIFF audio files, each with a length of approximately one hour. I then copied these files into Apple iTunes and produced twenty-eight corresponding audio CDs. These CDs were then transcribed into Microsoft Word 2007. The resulting searchable document file is over 450 single-spaced pages long and contains over 200,000 words.

The first thirteen CDs contain the oral history recorded February 1995; the next ten CDs reflect the March sessions; and the final five CDs come from the July sessions. For the July sessions, Ken Poston is joined by Tim Owens of National Public Radio. Owens subsequently used excerpts from the July recordings to produce *Gerry Mulligan: Intricacy in a Lower Register*, one of NPR's programs in its "Jazz Profiles" series.⁶¹⁹ The following pages provide an overview of the contents of each of the twenty-eight CDs.

⁶¹⁹ A webcast of this 47-minute program is available at <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=89667893>

CD 1 Length: 1:00:19

Mulligan clarifies that he was born in Queens Village Island, New York on April 6, 1927. He claims that numerous writers have gotten his birthplace wrong.

His father's family was from Ireland; his mother's was from Ireland and Germany. Men in both parents' family worked for the railroad. Mulligan has always loved reading about transportation and the railroad.

Mulligan was the fourth child and had three older brothers.

His family moved to Marion, Ohio when Mulligan was less than a year old. His father was an industrial engineer and took job with the Marion Shovel Company.

Mulligan was raised by the family's nanny, Lily Rowen. She was African-American and exposed him to jazz.

He was influenced by travelling black musicians who stayed at Lily's house.

Mulligan's attempt to learn to play piano in second grade was failure due to his refusal to play what was written.

He remembers the Palace Theater in Marion where live musicians accompanied silent movies from the pit.

At age ten, he lived in New Jersey with maternal grandmother while his father was in Puerto Rico on business.

The family moved to Chicago (late 1930s) where Mulligan saw many big bands perform at theaters.

When family moved to Kalamazoo, Michigan in early 1940s, Mulligan learned to play clarinet.

He wrote an arrangement of "Lover" as a student in a Catholic school. It was never performed as it was rejected by the nuns because of its risqué title.

When family moved to Detroit in late 1941, Mulligan heard Erskine Hawkins perform "After Hours Blues." This was just before the U.S. entered the war.

His father soon took a job in a beryllium copper plant in Reading, Pennsylvania and moved the family there.

He remembers occupying the first clarinet chair in the high school band. He admired the school's bandleader.

He studied with clarinetist Samuel Correnti at a Reading music store. Correnti taught him how to transcribe big band recordings by such leaders as Artie Shaw and Jimmy Dorsey.

His school bandleader got him paid playing engagements at private clubs on Sundays. Eventually, he got a steady gig with the Harvey Marburger band.

Father moved the family again in 1943, this time to Philadelphia.

Mulligan briefly wrote arrangements for Johnny Warrenton who led radio station WCAU's house band. Warrenton coached him on voicing and other arranging skills.

Mulligan led his own band while attending high school (West Philadelphia Catholic) for which he wrote Glenn Miller-like arrangements.

He played in Alex Bartha's band on the Steel Pier in Atlantic City during the summer before the twelfth grade (1945).

His twelfth-grade physics class drove him to drop out of school.

He was hired by bandleader Tommy Tucker to arrange three ballads or two jump tunes per week.

He travelled with the Tucker band to Chicago for a six-week engagement at the Stevens Hotel. While there, he heard Dizzy Gillespie perform with the Billy Eckstein Orchestra.

CD 2 Length: 1:01:57

Tucker let Mulligan go after three months. Mulligan believes it was because his arrangements were too progressive for Tucker's "mickey-mouse" style.

He registered for the draft in April 1945 (the month of his eighteenth birthday). He failed his physical exam because during the interview portion of the exam, he froze, a lump formed in his throat, and could not speak.

He reflects on his childhood in Marion and his relationship with his brothers. He hated leaving Marion.

Because his family moved so often, he had to get used to being an outsider. His brother Don was often mean to him. Mulligan believes these factors contributed to his becoming a defensive and short-tempered person.

He relates his personality flaws to his experience with Benny Goodman. Mulligan wrote a few charts for Goodman in 1949-50. Goodman confronted him about his anger and depression. He ended up not using Mulligan's charts.

He reflects on his heroin addiction which began in New York in the late 1940s.

He remembers the bad experience he had working with Stan Getz while writing "Five Brothers" and "Four and One More."

He talks about leaving New York and going to Washington, DC where his parents lived in the hopes of kicking his heroin habit. His father gets him a job at a bank that lasts less than two weeks.

Gail Madden, who had started a project to help musicians give up heroin, contacts him from New York and convinces him to return. She was also trying to work with Max Roach and George Wallington.

CD 3 Length: 59:38

Madden uses various techniques such as “sleep conditioning” to “cure” Mulligan and is somewhat successful. Her “scientific theories” about how to deal with addiction had helped her cure Kenton arranger Bob Graettinger. She convinces Mulligan to begin writing and playing again.

Mulligan recalls that Rita Haworth’s uncle and his wife were a ballroom dance team. They offered Mulligan a piano/arranging job, and also wanted him to be the wife’s dance partner. He “chickened out” and turned down the offer.

He talks about how Philadelphia police were rough on jazz musicians and that there were hateful men on the narcotics squad.

Eventually, Mulligan and Madden run out of money and decide to go to California. They go to Reading first where his parents lived. His father has him arrested by the FBI, but he was let go because they found no drugs in his possession.

They hitchhike out west and end up in Albuquerque where Mulligan plays briefly with a western swing band.

When they get to California, Bob Graettinger gets him a job writing for Stan Kenton. Mulligan reflects on his relationship with Kenton and Kenton’s sidemen.

CD 4 Length: 59:55

He reflects on his anger at being relegated to writing dance charts for Kenton.

He also reflects on a dreadful experience he had trying to write for Woody Herman.

Mulligan talks about his problems getting along with others. He thinks it is interesting that he was often characterized as an “intellectual elite” despite his never having earned a high school diploma.

He then discusses the “black/white” situation in jazz, particularly his own personal relationships with black musicians. Things were fine in the 1940s and 1950s. With the rise of the black power movement in the 1960s, problems began.

He talks about his positive relationships with Duke Ellington and Harry Carney. He resents, however, Dizzy Gillespie’s negative references to him in the book *To Be or Not to Bop*. He felt Milt Jackson and Ray Brown also treated white musicians unfairly.

He talks more about his complex relationship with Gillespie and his good relationship with Charlie Mingus. He recalls a negative incident involving Stanley Turrentine at the Newport Jazz Festival (ca. 1980).

He reflects on various topics such as the rise and fall of big bands after the war, the radio days, the baby boomer generation’s destructive pop music, jazz being on the fringe since the 1930s, and politics.

He then gets into his experience writing for Elliott Lawrence when Lawrence was leading the WCAU band in Philadelphia in the late 1940s

CD 5 Length: 1:00:53

Mulligan fondly remembers his experience hanging out with group singers such as Lillian Lane, Buddy Stewart, and Stewart’s sister Beverly. Through Beverly’s connections, he landed an arranging position in Gene Krupa’s big band.

He recalls getting arrested for marijuana possession while with Charlie Parker (whom he had previously met and performed with in Philadelphia) after arriving in California to join Krupa’s band.

He discusses his tenure with Krupa. He was hired to write bebop charts. He liked Krupa as a leader. He particularly liked the sax section. Getz replaced Charlie Ventura on tenor after Ventura left the band. Getz was insulting and “downright mean.” He remembers when the two later recorded an album together (*Getz Meets Mulligan*) and that he did not like when they switched horns for several songs.

He talks about when he started playing baritone sax after hanging out with Johnny Dee, a baritone player in Frankie Carl’s band.

He started playing more and writing less after he got addicted to heroin. He talks about playing with Chubby Jackson, Kai Winding, Dave Lambert, and Gene Roland in the late 1940s.

CD 6 Length: 1:01:20

Mulligan remembers Charlie Parker rehearsing with the Roland band.

He then discusses his experience writing for and playing in the Claude Thornhill band. He recalls how much he loved listening to the band as a child. When he first moved to New York, he could hear the Thornhill band rehearse from his apartment.

He then gets into how he met and befriended Gil Evans, and it was Evans who got him into Thornhill's band. He remembers that his first arrangement for Thornhill was "Poor Little Rich Girl."

He then talks about the Krupa band. Besides writing for Krupa, he was "forced into service" to play lead alto on occasion.

He talks about his early fascination with the possibilities of the baritone saxophone's role in a big band. He particularly liked how Ozzie Nelson scored the instrument.

He then gets back to Thornhill and talks about the various imaginative approaches to orchestration that Thornhill and his arrangers employed. He highly respected Gil Evans and viewed him as a philosopher/guru.

He then relates several anecdotes about Charlie Parker and Lester Young.

Mulligan remembers that he had to keep writing for other bands to survive. He regrets that his attempt to work for Benny Goodman failed.

He remembers spending lots of time at Evans' apartment as did many other New York jazz musicians. This leads to a discussion of the Miles Davis Nonet instrumentation and how he, Evans, Davis, and others worked out the Nonet configuration at Evans' apartment.

This leads to a discussion of the history of the Nonet.

CD 7 Length: 1:00:07

Mulligan talks about the Davis Nonet's short engagement at the Royal Roost.

He felt the band didn't really "settle down" and "gel" there. The fact that the solos were too long negatively affected the continuity of the composed sections. He was particularly unhappy with Davis's recruiting trombonist Mike Swerin.

He remembers the difficulties the Nonet had getting a "natural balance" at the subsequent recording sessions. He thought that Davis, Lee Konitz, and Max Roach played brilliantly. He asserts that Evans' role has been overstated.

He then switches gears and talks about the playing styles of Gillespie and Parker. He remembers the circumstances of his first experience with Parker whom he met and

performed with while he (Mulligan) was composing and arranging for Elliot Lawrence in Philadelphia.

He then shares his early experiences in California. Kenton was his main source of income. Since he did not travel with the band, he began playing around Los Angeles when Kenton's organization was on the road.

He spent a lot of time playing at the Lighthouse in Hermosa Beach.

He eventually met Dick Bock who hired him to play the off-nights at the Haig. He then talks about the justification for the pianoless configuration of his quartet and the playing abilities of Chet Baker (trumpet), Chico Hamilton (drums), and Carson Smith (bass).

The Quartet played an engagement at the Blackhawk in San Francisco. While there, they recorded for Fantasy Records. He thought this hurt his relationship with Bock who had been recording the Quartet on the Pacific Jazz label.

When the quartet returned to Los Angeles, it headlined at the Haig. Hamilton's leaving to go on the road with Lena Horne especially angered Mulligan

CD 8 Length: 56:47

Stan Getz subbed for Mulligan for two weeks after Mulligan was injured in an auto accident on the way home from the Haig on the night Hamilton resigned.

Mulligan describes Chet Baker's wild lifestyle. This negatively affected the trumpeter's playing.

Baker and his "pack" moved into Mulligan's house (against Mulligan's better judgment). Mulligan relates the circumstances surrounding his arrest after the police found heroin buried in the backyard.

He eventually served three and half months at a Los Angeles County work farm. Mulligan describes his incarceration experience.

He then talks about how he and Baker split up after a pay dispute on the day he was released from the work farm.

Mulligan then goes back to talking about the tentette he had formed just before leaving New York. He describes the differences between this ensemble and the Davis Nonet. He also talks about his relationship with producer Gene Norman. He regrets that the tentette recorded only one album.

He talks about his first wife Arlyne and the problems with their relationship.

He then jumps ahead to the 1954 quartet with Bob Brookmeyer and its successful engagement at the Storyville club in Boston. He tells how this group travelled to Paris, how sick he was there, and how his sidemen threatened to quit (and would have if Mulligan had given them their plane tickets).

He also talks a little about his relationship with producer Norman Granz.

CD 9 Length: 37:44

Mulligan talks about counterpoint in jazz which he says began with the “Dixieland” style of the 1920s. He talks about the rhythmic approach and the harmonic implications of the counterpoint works he wrote. He describes Ellington’s approach to counterpoint.

He describes his mid 1950s sextet with the “four-horn front line,” bass, and drums (no piano). He remembers several of the high school concerts the sextet performed, particularly the one at Stockton High School. This group toured for approximately two years.

He then talks about 1957 being a very good year for him. He recorded numerous albums including the several *Mulligan Meets* albums. He discusses his relationship with Thelonious Monk.

He talks about performing on the Dinah Shore Show. Frank Sinatra, who performed on the same show, was not nice to Mulligan.

He is proud of the fact that he could fit in with so many different musicians. He was always willing to sit in. He particularly enjoyed appearing on *The Sound of Jazz* television broadcast playing alongside so many esteemed jazz artists.

CD 10 Length: 1:06:18

He continues talking about how much he enjoyed *The Sound of Jazz*. He says that most television shows featuring jazz since then have been “pretty hokie” with the musicians dressed up like gamblers or dancers. Mulligan was on several of the Timex shows. The one he did with Jack Teagarden was unrewarding for him.

He discusses the big band he formed in 1957. It didn’t really “gel.” There wasn’t enough material, but he really liked the personnel, particularly Lee Konitz and Zoot Sims. The trumpet section consisted of four players from different styles. There were three French horns, no trombones and no piano. This was a very expensive band to operate, and he only had time to write a few charts for it. He then talks about wanting to do an album with this band of the songs that he wrote with Judy Holliday.

He then discusses his personal life in the 1950s. He enjoyed being a bachelor. He went to the theater a lot when he lived at the Algonquin Hotel in New York. He made lots of friends and attended numerous parties.

He remembers going to parties for *Beyond the Fringe*, a British show starring Dudley Moore. He attended a party at director Bobby Lewis's house where he met Lena Horne and Marlene Dietrich.

He also met actress Judy Holliday at one of these parties. The two "hit it off" and subsequently began a long-term romantic relationship. He fondly remembers spending time in her country house where the two of them wrote songs together.

Mulligan remembers that, after Nat Hentoff suggested to Anita Loos on a radio program that musical theater would benefit from taking advantage of what jazz musicians have to offer, Loos contacted Mulligan and commissioned him to write the music for *Happy Birthday*, a play that originally starred Helen Hayes. Mulligan convinced Loos to allow Holliday to write the lyrics.

Loos, Holliday, and Mulligan rented a house in Bridgehampton where they worked on the project for an entire summer. Other writers were brought in, but they never really got it together. Years later, it was completed and performed at the University of Alabama for one week. It starred Fannie Pflagg. Mulligan wishes it had succeeded.

CD 11 Length: 1:07:30

Mulligan remembers when Arthur Freed and Vincent Minelli recruited him to appear in the movie *Subterraneans*. This happened to be during the time that Judy Holliday was filming *Bells Are Ringing* also under Minelli's direction. He relates how difficult that experience was for her. He believes that because he intervened on her behalf on numerous issues with Minelli, his reputation in Hollywood became that of a meddler and troublemaker.

He talks about the Concert Jazz Band (CJB), covering topics such as instrumentation, the sidemen, and the arrangers. It was a big money investment, and he got help from Mel Lewis and Bob Brookmeyer on the business issues. The players drank too much and were always tired.

While Holliday was on the road performing a dramatic play about actress Laurette Taylor, Mulligan was notified that the doctors discovered a lump in her breast and that she required a "radical mastectomy." He flew back to New York to be with her during the surgery. He describes the unpleasant situation which required him to continuously to fly back and forth to be with her while the CJB was on the road.

He then gets back to talking about the CJB's multiple international road trips and recording sessions. He talks about always heavily being involved in post-production.

CD 12 Length: 49:01

Mulligan discusses the problems with “touring shows.” He felt they were too heavily loaded, the example being the show he did with Ellington and Brubeck. The competing shows in the same cities hurt each other. He believes things got better for him after Norman Granz bought his show even though he still competed with other shows.

He also expressed problems with jazz festivals. He felt that they were mostly just big promotions. “You do your big tap dance and get off.” They (the festivals) didn’t put anything back into the music. The audiences were inattentive, especially the “young idiots with beach balls.” He much preferred playing in venues that had intimacy.

He talks about the special sound of the baritone sax. Its sound is an octave lower than people are used to hearing music. He fondly remembers the piece that Ellington and Strayhorn wrote for him and Harry Carney called “Prima Bara Dubla.” It was performed at the Newport Jazz Festival. He says that it was never recorded in a studio and the score has since disappeared. He talks about his friendship with Harry Carney.

He gets back to talking about Judy Holliday’s sickness (breast cancer). She didn’t like going out, but they did go to a party for Peter Sellers hosted by Phyllis Newman. He met Leonard Bernstein there who completely shunned Mulligan.

Holliday agreed to direct and star in *Hot Spot*, a musical about a Peace Corps worker. Mulligan attempted to assist her but again was shunned. “Nobody ever asks a musician for advice.” Mary Rodgers wrote the music, and Stephen Sondheim wrote some of the lyrics. It had a brief run on Broadway in 1963. Holliday’s illness then progressed.

CD 13 Length: 15:50

On most of this CD, Mulligan describes Holliday’s deep depression as she got sicker.

There is more about the CJB when it was playing at the Village Vanguard and Birdland in 1965. The band did not tour that much that year.

Mulligan says that 1965 was a tough year for him. It was the year of Holliday’s death. “It made me a little crazy.” He describes her funeral as a “circus.”

The CJB also disbanded in 1965.

CD 14 Length: 59:21

Mulligan addresses his reputation as a hothead. He thinks it has been blown out of proportion. He refers to the *Downbeat* article that describes his losing his temper at the Haig when patrons talked while he played. He acknowledges that there were writers like Gene Lees who saw him as gentler.

He talks about incidents with Krupa and Goodman where his anger really hurt him. He thinks a lot of his anger came from his excessive drinking. Franca's outlook on life where anger has no purpose has really helped him.

He says that "anger is a cover-up for despair" and Catholicism taught him that despair is the one unforgivable sin. He later learned in analysis about the self-centeredness of the emotionally disabled—that mental illness is in some respects selfish.

He talks about similar issues that affected Bud Powell.

He switches gears and talks about some of the albums he made such as *If You Can't Beat 'em, Join 'em*, when he adapted pop tunes to his style; and *Feelin' Good*, when he used strings.

He describes two of his symphonic works; "Entente" and "K-4." He remembers that Zuban Mehta programmed "Entente" with a Beethoven symphony.

He then talks about two of the movie soundtracks he wrote. He was unhappy with his work on *Luv*. He got help from Bill Holman. The music was good, but he felt it didn't work with the movie. He was much happier with his work on *La Menace*. He felt that the music's moods were exactly right. Unfortunately, his favorite parts were ultimately cut.

He describes activities surrounding his re-forming his big band in the 1970s. Franca pushed him to do it and acted as his manager. This band was bigger than the CJB since it had four trumpets, five saxophones, and a piano. The band travelled by bus and played one-nighters at schools, clubs, and concert halls. They also toured Europe and Japan. Mulligan says that this tour was documented on *CBS Sunday Morning*.

CD 15 Length: 52:35

He continues describing his 1970s big band. It was intended as a concert/festival band. The album *Little Big Horn* was perceived as rock-oriented. Dave Grusin arranged most of the pieces for it. Mulligan was particularly pleased with "Under a Star" with Grusin on synthesizer and "Bright Angel Falls" with its hint of gospel.

He then talks about *Re-Birth of the Cool*. Miles Davis had lost the original scores so it had to be transcribed from the recordings. Davis might have gotten involved, but he died. A trumpet and baritone were added to the original instrumentation.

He discusses the Joni Mitchell's album of Mingus tunes. Supposedly, Mingus wanted Mulligan and Dizzy Gillespie involved. Apparently Mitchell was misquoted in the press when she said that Mulligan interfered in the album production process.

He remembers when he was invited to perform at the Club Med in Guadeloupe. Franca joined him. They came across a "healer" who apparently cured a woman who had been confined in a wheelchair since a skiing accident. Supposedly Mulligan got this healer to work with Mingus who was suffering from ALS.

He says that jazz festivals of today are "supermarkets of jazz." Newport was different and more like a Tanglewood festival. He remembers hanging out with friends there: Cannonball Adderly, Paul Desmond (who drank way too much), and others.

CD 16 Length: 40:20

Mulligan talks more about the Concert Jazz Band. Nick Travis and Bob Brookmeyer convinced him to form and lead it. Mulligan brought in Mel Lewis and Bill Holman. Norman Granz put together a U.S. tour of five or six dates before the band toured Europe.

Mulligan was distracted by Judy Holliday's sickness and often left the tour to care for her.

The CJB performed at Hunter College, New York before going to Europe. Mulligan said that the members of the band drank and carried on too much. He talks about dates in Santa Monica, Berlin, Milan, Goteborg, and Brussels.

After the European tour, the band did not tour much. They often played at the Village Vanguard and Birdland. It was too expensive to tour. Brookmeyer and Mel Lewis helped with managing the band's business issues.

Mulligan then continues to talk about Holliday's career. After she died, he met actress Sandy Dennis and they started going together. He says that Dennis "was much maligned." Eventually, they drifted apart.

CD 17 Length: 31:22

The late 1960s were a "fairly unrewarding time" for Mulligan. He did not have his own band. In 1968, he began playing with Brubeck's trio. He played mostly with European rhythm sections before that. It was a refreshing break for him not to have the responsibility of being a band leader.

He talks about when he was “holed up” at the Beverly Wilshire while he wrote the material for the *Age of Steam*. He then describes the band he put together for this album. It had a six-piece rhythm section and a four-horn “front line.” He liked the album very much.

He says that *Age of Steam* “recharged my batteries” after the difficult times brought about by Holliday’s death, the breakup of the CJB, and the stormy relationship with Sandy Dennis.

He then talks about how Franca later helped him with his career. She was a realist, an optimist, and a pragmatist. He hated dealing with agents and promoters, so she took over as manager. He says that he turned out to be a “patsy” and could be conned into doing things, so she protected him from getting into trouble because of this.

He talks about rehearsing his symphonic work “Entente” at La Scala in Milan. He kept hearing the orchestra rehearse Puccini’s *Turandot*. It was Mulligan’s favorite opera, and he feels he might have been influenced by it. He then recalls the story of what he believes was Toscanini’s initial involvement with this opera.

CD 18 Length: 1:01:13

Mulligan recalls that right after he split with Gail Madden in California in 1952, he returned to his heroin habit. He says that it wasn’t as bad as when he was in New York, but it was still time consuming and constant.

He tried with difficulty to find medical help. He believed that the police attitude was that drug addiction was an incurable disease, and they were therefore “rotten” to drug addicts, particularly jazz musicians. The situation was particularly bad in New York where jazz musicians were “shaken down” when they came through town.

He believed that doctors were afraid to treat drug addicts. When he returned to New York, he was introduced to Bill Haber who treated him twice a week with a “modified Freudian system.” Mulligan often fell asleep during the sessions. He eventually put himself in a New York clinic for two weeks “and that was the end of it.”

He gets into the politics of the “war on drugs” and his belief that you “can’t legislate morality.” That’s why Prohibition failed. He believes that our culture nurtures addictions. He then criticizes the world of entertainment’s role in this process.

He then talks about his period of productivity in the 1950s after he kicked the habit. His favorite quartet was the one with Art Farmer. It was the most “sophisticated.”

He discusses the political atmosphere of the 1960s and the fact that he was always skeptical and suspicious of “movements.”

He describes his hairstyle of the 1950s. He thought he could prevent baldness by combing it forward. Supposedly it was called the “mulligan haircut.”

CD 19 Length: 1:00:56

Mulligan says that he lived a bohemian lifestyle when he and Gail Madden were together. He didn't, however, believe that he was part of the beat generation. He talks about some of the books he read or tried to read. He didn't like Kerouac, and he found *Ulysses* “opaque and impenetrable.” He particularly enjoyed reading history.

Madden gave him Winwood Green's *Martyrdom of Man* which describes how the dogmatic Shiites brought down the advances of the Arab civilization of the Middle Ages. Mulligan compares this to the counter productivity of the western religions.

He then reflects on his lifelong view of himself as an outsider. His frequent relocations from state to state as a child prevented him from belonging to any particular groups. He even felt estranged by his brothers.

He didn't feel like an outsider, however, during his early years in New York. He didn't have any negative experiences back then with respect to racial differences. This changed in the 1960s with the politicization of jazz due to the rise of the black power movement. He felt the new black musicians were particularly mean to him just because he was white.

He talks about the difficulties of being a white jazz musician, and explains that European influences were just as significant as African influences.

His interest in classical music began when he was child. Krupa, in particular, turned him on to classical music. He especially likes Bartok's Concerto for Orchestra and its “unique approach to sonorities.” He talks about the difficulties and his attempts to integrate improvisation into orchestral music. It's difficult because classical music's complicated progressions don't relate to songlike melodies.

CD 20 Length: 1:00:02

He talks about the problems with published discographies of his work. The mistakes of one discographer are often propagated through subsequent discographies.

He brings up the movie *Subterraneans* again. Freed and Minelli recruited him after a performance at a club one night. Andre Previn wrote the soundtrack. The shooting of this movie occurred while Judy Holliday was working on *Bells Are Ringing*.

Mulligan says Minelli mistreated Holliday. Mulligan and Holliday actually re-edited the movie and submitted it back to Minelli as her preferred version. Minelli was quite angry.

Mulligan got “the cold shoulder” from lots of people after this unpleasant episode. Sinatra was mean to him, Copland “cut me dead,” and Bernstein totally shunned him. He says that Bernstein was “a man loaded with problems.”

He continues to talk about, in quite a bit of detail, the *Bells Are Ringing* production. He talks about meeting Steve Allen on a cruise ship and the two of them talking about Holliday’s “cloud of doom.”

Mulligan appreciates that Holliday was very supportive of his musical career.

CD 21 Length: 1:01:50

Mulligan talks about songwriting with Holliday. They performed a Christmas song on the Dinah Shore Show.

He laments that people resented him for interfering in Holliday’s career. He believed that he was viewed as “Svengali.” He then gives a lengthy description of the various production issues, particularly Minelli’s complex camera moves, associated with *Bells Are Ringing*.

He then revisits his association with Anita Loos and his work on writing a score for her play *Happy Birthday*. Supposedly, Mulligan was denigrated in a book about Loos.

Happy Birthday was eventually performed at the “Town and Gown Theater” in Birmingham, Alabama. The director gave Mulligan and several musicians access to a house in Birmingham where they lived and worked on the music.

He recalls that it was just before this is that he met Franca while he was in Milan making an album with Astor Piazzolla. She was a photographer who was a friend of Piazzolla’s. She enlisted Mulligan to be part of a photo shoot she was doing of children. They fell in love and were inseparable, eventually marrying in 1974.

He then talks about the album that he and Holliday produced of songs they wrote just before he formed the CJB.

CD 22 Length: 58:32

He mentions drinking with Johnny Mercer and the two of them trying to get a project together.

He again brings up “Prima Bara Dubla,” the piece that Ellington and Strayhorn wrote for him and Harry Carney.

He says that he and Gene Lees started working on a musical about Diamond Jim Brady. They approached Hal Prince about it and found out that Jackie Gleason and Lucille Ball were already doing something on Brady.

He mentions a project called “Visit from a Small Planet,” an opportunity to make an anti-war political statement. This never really got off the ground. Mulligan laments that there are numerous examples of him not being able to follow through with good ideas.

He talks about his collaborations with Antonio Carlos Jobim and the nuances of Brazilian music. He says the music has an invisible downbeat and “[beat] one floats.” He says that it’s not natural to our “rhythmic sensibilities.”

He discusses his participation on Barry Manilow’s *Paradise Café* album.

He remembers that baritone saxophonist Serge Chaloff was quite “mean.” Supposedly Chaloff ridiculed Woody Herman and “started a lot of guys on heroin.”

He talks about the four-horn setup in his 1956 sextet. He felt that he, Zoot Sims, Jon Eardley, and Bob Brookmeyer produced a great sound. He remembers a club in Baltimore where they performed. He was amused by the sign out front which listed “Brooks Meyers and Soot Sims” as members of the sextet

He recalls the group of musicians who frequented Gil Evans’ apartment, including Charlie Parker. Parker loved Debussy’s *The Children’s Corner*.

Mulligan says that he and Lennie Tristano never played together, but they liked each other personally. He felt Tristano put too much of a “strait jacket” on his rhythm section. Tristano thought this was necessary because of the complexity of the horn lines.

CD 23 Length: 44:26

Mulligan enumerates a list of some of the people who were important to him:

1. His parents
2. Lily, his African-American governess
3. Sister Ramanda, his sixth grade music teacher in Kalamazoo
4. Sam Correnti, his music teacher in Reading
5. Richard Helaine, a friend who was an alto saxophonist in his first band.
6. Mr. Moffet, the bandmaster of Central Catholic High, Reading
7. Tommy Tucker
8. The group singers he knew, especially those in the Thornhill band

9. Bill Finnegan, arranger
10. Ralph Burns, arranger
11. Neal Hefti, arranger
12. Eddy Finckel, arranger
13. Mel Powell, arranger
14. Elliot Lawrence
15. Gil Evans
16. Claude Thornhill
17. Zoot Sims
18. His first love, “Augga”
19. Gail Madden

CD 24 Length: 59:25

Mulligan talks about his childhood again. Growing up, he listened to the big bands on the radio. When he got to New York, he went from one rehearsal to another, including Goodman’s and Dorsey’s, just to listen.

In New York, he was only interested in arranging and was able to hear the best practitioners. He paid close attention to instrumentation.

There was an atmosphere of brotherhood in the 1940s, regardless of race. He feels white musicians have been dismissed since then.

In his arranging, he tried to combine small band things he did with big band instrumentation. In the 1930s, big bands were smaller, but then they got heavier—like an “underdone donut.”

He noted that Krupa liked “fleet” bands that were on top of the beat and that could swing without the help of a rhythm section. Mulligan’s early arrangements were based on a bebop style with concerto-grosso-like instrumentation. Examples are “Elevation” and “Disc Jockey Jump.”

It was different with Thornhill and Kenton. Kenton liked Mulligan’s “Youngblood,” but he played it too fast, so Mulligan feels that it didn’t build in the right way.

Krupa’s conception was more of a dramatic flair (with drums). Eddie Finckel did “such good writing” for Krupa. His arrangements had a more modern sound, perfect for Krupa. Neal Hefti also wrote very nice charts. He was a “clever arranger.”

He again recalls his first encounter with Charlie Parker in Philadelphia and how he got to play tenor saxophone with Parker and Don Byas after a radio show with Elliot Lawrence.

He talks about the profound effect Parker's playing had on him. Parker had a unique approach to rhythm and playing in a progression. Mulligan heard a tape recording which was made when Parker was only seventeen. "He was already Bird." Mulligan was influenced in that he, after hearing Parker, wanted to lighten up his time. He went looking for a mouthpiece that "blew on attack" to help him accomplish this. Parker broke through progressions to create more flamboyant melodies. Mulligan claims Parker influenced his writing as well.

He then talks about his latest album, *Dragonfly*. He realized in the studio, that he didn't know the progression of the title cut well enough to improvise over it. He wrote it but couldn't play it! This supposedly happened with "Venus de Milo" as well.

He recalls the arrangements he wrote for Parker with strings. He used a lot of unisons with the strings. He particularly remembers "Out of Nowhere" when Parker plays an amazing four-bar break at the key change. It "just put me away."

He compares the personal styles of Parker and Lester Young. Mulligan admired Parker as a big brother.

Mulligan says that he had to concentrate on either playing or writing. He couldn't do both as Cohn and Mandel could.

He then talks about the Thornhill band. It was unlike any other band. The "ensemble band" concept was great, and it was fun to play in. Mulligan used a swinging approach to his writing for Thornhill while staying within the band's style.

CD 25 Length: 1:00:02

He mentions "Rose of the Rio Grande" and "Poor Little Rich Girl" as examples of his arrangements that maintain the Thornhill signature sonority while still swinging.

He talks about his decision to exclusively play baritone saxophone early in his career. He sold his other saxophones: a Conn alto he regretted selling and a Buescher tenor like Lester Young's. He avoids stereotypical (tuba-like) use of the baritone in his arranging. He prefers to employ it as a melodic instrument and he says that its sonority is conducive to counterpoint. As he mastered playing it, it became easier to compose for it.

He then discusses the *Birth of the Cool* instrumentation. He says that it was the conception of his subsequent ensembles: pianoless quartet, sextet, and Concert Jazz Band.

He completely reversed course when he use a six-piece rhythm section for *Age of Steam*. The rhythm section became part of the palette at his disposal for arranging. He thinks that nowadays, arrangers "overwrite" for the rhythm section.

He brings up black/white issues again and laments the “anti-white sentiment” in jazz. He is adamant that European influences are just as important as African influences.

He compares the California and New York jazz scenes.

He talks about Miles Davis’s role in the *Birth of the Cool*. Davis gave Mulligan the nickname “Jeru.” Mulligan also wrote arrangements of “Jeru” for Lawrence and Thornhill.

CD 26 Length: 49:26

Mulligan describes the tentette that he formed in New York after *Birth of the Cool*. He loved the effect of having an additional baritone saxophone.

He talks about leaving New York with Gail Madden and hitchhiking to California. She helped him get hired as an arranger for Kenton.

His initial writing for Kenton was polyphonic or what Mulligan calls “unison with counterpoint lines.” Kenton didn’t like this and relegated Mulligan to writing dance arrangements only. The two constantly feuded.

He then talks about the pianoless quartet and his attraction to Chet Baker’s playing style. He says that his arrangements that they played at the Haig were based on melody and sounded natural and worked out. He thinks this is why they were successful.

He criticizes pop music. He particularly hated the Broadway show *Hair*.

He gets back to his relationship with Kenton and talks about the “horizontal” versus “vertical” approach to arranging.

He discusses the evolution of the original pianoless quartet to the subsequent quartets. He compares his sextet with the quartets and talks about the “*Mulligan Meets ...*” series for Verve.

His original concept for the Concert Jazz Band was for it to be an extension of the *Birth of the Cool* band, but it didn’t work out that way. Mulligan wrote very little for the CJB.

CD 27 Length: 41:27

He talks more about the CJB. In retrospect, he feels he should have played piano on more tunes. He thought the piano would have made it feel more like Ellington’s

band. The soloists were key in this band. Mulligan was a fulltime bandleader for this band.

He brings up his seven-year association with Brubeck in the 1960s. Eventually, he got restless.

He talks about his association with Astor Piazzolla that led to his meeting Franca and how she helped support the writing activities for *Happy Birthday* in Alabama.

There is also more about his songwriting with Judy Holliday, and he talks about the songs “Ballad of Pearly Sue,” “The Real Thing,” and “I Hear the Shadows Dancing.”

He talks about the *Age of Steam* rhythm section again. He says it was “heavily orchestrated” and “Grand Tour” was “sparse but good.”

He then discusses his orchestral works. He got started with Brubeck and the Cincinnati Orchestra. Harry Freedman composed settings of Mulligan melodies in the styles of various composers. Mulligan wrote “Entente for Baritone Saxophone and Orchestra” and he scored his “K-4 Pacific” from *Age of Steam* for orchestra.

He feels that the baritone sax is the perfect orchestral instrument. It’s like the cello in that it fits in everywhere. He learned not to use jazz rhythm sections with the orchestra.

CD 28 Length: 1:16:46

Mulligan talks about his disappointments with *Re-Birth of the Cool*.

He then talks about his current (1995) group. It’s a quartet of saxophone, piano, bass, and drums. The challenge is to sustain melodic interest. He approaches melody as if it were an octave higher. Examples are “Curtains” and “Midas Lives.”

Certain progressions fascinate him, and the one for “Walk on the Water” is an example. The progression becomes a “springboard to new ideas.”

He says that the film scores he wrote were most successful when he composed them without seeing the movie. He liked using a stopwatch for the various sections.

He generates new ideas on the piano and finishes writing a piece before the arranging process begins.

He thought Dave Brubeck was a gentle, thoughtful accompanist even though Desmond thought he “underplayed.” Brubeck was sometimes criticized for not swinging, and Mulligan believed he was treated unfairly by jazz critics.

Mulligan reminisces about jazz in the 1930s. He grew up hearing bands on the radio. He always had a fascination with orchestration and the sound of bands.

He learned to play clarinet before saxophone which he thinks is beneficial.

He doesn't feel like he mastered the baritone saxophone until around age forty (1967). That's when he settled into the right mouthpiece and got control of the instrument.

He feels others use reeds that are too soft and the mouthpiece has too big of a gap. He is more comfortable with a stiff reed and closed mouthpiece. He says that this limits the overtones and the sound is more centered. Parker, Hawkins, and Webster all used stiff reeds.

He credits Ellington with giving the baritone melodic importance, and he acknowledges Harry Carney's influence.

He recently started liking the sound of the soprano saxophone in a big band.

He again talks about jazz being the convergence of both African and European traditions. Unfortunately, there has been black versus white turmoil in the jazz scene. The division has never been more pronounced and "doors have been closed in my face." Jazz history has been the victim of revisionism.

The Gerry Mulligan Collection at the Library of Congress

In 1992, Jon Newsom, who was then the Chief of the Music Division of the Library of Congress, visited Gerry and Franca Mulligan at their Darien, Connecticut, home to talk about the possibility of the Mulligans transferring Gerry's music manuscripts to the Library. This meeting began a close relationship between Newsom and the Mulligans. When Gerry died in 1996, Franca donated to the Library not only the bulk of Mulligan source materials, but also his gold-plated Conn baritone saxophone, the instrument he played in all public performances the last decade of his life.

On April 6, 1999, an exhibition dedicated to Mulligan opened in the foyer of the Performing Arts Reading Room of the Library of Congress. The exhibition featured numerous items drawn from the Gerry Mulligan Collection, including his saxophone, the Grammy award he won for *Walk on the Water* (1980), photographs, manuscripts, scores, record album covers, and miscellaneous other artifacts. To celebrate the opening of the exhibition, a special ceremony took place in Madison Hall of the Library where the U.S. Marine Band performed, Mulligan was posthumously bestowed a statesman's honor, and Scott Robinson played "Ontet" on Mulligan's saxophone. Franca Mulligan then graciously hosted a dinner which was followed by a performance of the Gerry Mulligan Tribute Band. The band, led by Bob Brookmeyer, featured trumpeter Randy Brecker, baritone saxophonist Scott Robinson, alto saxophonist Dick Oatts, pianist Ted Rosenthal, bassist Dean Johnson, and drummer Ron Vincent.

The Gerry Mulligan Collection is housed in the Performing Arts Reading Room of the Library of Congress, LM 113, in the Madison Building, 101 Independence Ave. S.E., Washington, DC 20540. It consists of almost 1500 items, including scores, lead sheets, sketches, individual parts, photographs, sound recordings, correspondence, and other writings. The Library has also made available through the Collection's website⁶²⁰ selected excerpts from the Gerry Mulligan Oral History.

The Collection is open to the public, and individuals may request items for viewing in the Reading Room. The items available for viewing are listed in the Collection's catalogue which may be requested from a Division specialist. For each item listed in the catalogue, a code is assigned with the first character representing the item's category. The individual categories and their codes are as follows:

| <u>Code</u> | <u>Category</u> |
|-------------|---|
| A | Album score |
| B | Lead sheets and sketches |
| C | Concert Jazz Band arrangements and parts |
| D | Miscellaneous arrangements for larger bands |
| E | Small band arrangements |
| F | Symphonic arrangements |
| T | Tentette arrangements (personal gig books) |

Each item is stored in a folder within a box, both of which are specified in the catalogue. Individuals may request a specific folder for viewing.

⁶²⁰ <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/diglib/ihis/html/mulligan/mulligan-home.html>

Over the past several years, a database has been developed that, for each item, contains: Title, Composer, Arranger, Orchestration, Instrumentation, Catalog Code, Box, Folder, Description, and Special Notes. A printout of the database is available for viewing in the Reading Room.

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